

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

**Heath and Reach,  
Nr Leighton Buzzard,  
Bedfordshire,  
LU7**



FOR

**Mrs A**

Prepared by:

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

Marketing by:

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# **INTRODUCTION**

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

The Building Survey takes the following format; there is an introductory section (which you are currently reading), which includes a synopsis of the building, and a summary of our findings.

We then go through a detailed examination of the property starting with the external areas working from the top of the property down, followed by the internal areas and the buildings services. We conclude with the section for your Legal Advisor and also attach some general information on the property market.

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

We recommend that you set aside time to read the report in full, consider the comments, make notes of any areas which you wish to discuss further and phone us.

We obviously expect you to read the entire report but we would suggest that you initially look at the summary, which refers to various sections in the report, which we recommend you read first so that you get a general feel for the way the report is written.

As part of our service we are more than happy to talk through the survey as many times as you wish until you are completely happy to make a decision. Ultimately, the decision to purchase the property is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

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# **REPORT FORMAT**

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

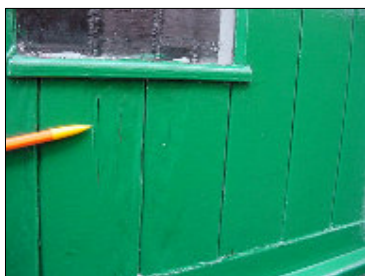
## **GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

*This has been given in the survey where it is considered it will aid understanding of the issues, or be of interest. This is shown in "italics" for clarity.*

## **TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED**

Throughout the Report, we have endeavoured to define any technical terms used. This is shown in "Courier New" typeface for clarity.

## **A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS**



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil 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 two storey detached cottage, which has been amended, extended and altered over the years and we are certain it was once two cottages.

There is a small garden to the front and smallish garden to the rear and a detached car port.

We have been unable to identify when the property was built and there are some very old timbers in the roof. This cottage style construction was typical of that around the Victorian era but there are certainly older elements to the property. 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:*

1783	Britain recognised American Independence
1793 – 1800	The Grand Union Canal was built
1801	First Census
1830	George IV dies
1837	Victoria becomes Queen of Great Britain
1851	First World Exhibition held in London
1854	Florence Nightingale pioneers modern nursing in the Crimea
1859	Charles Darwin proposes the Theory of Evolution

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## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



Rear View



Left hand view



Right hand view



Street view



Front garden



Rear garden

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# **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

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

## **Cellar**

Under left hand side of property

## **Ground Floor**

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance lobby
- 2) Front reception room to left hand side
- 3) Front reception room to right hand side
- 4) Rear reception room to left hand side
- 5) Conservatory to left hand side
- 6) Kitchen
- 7) WC

## **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Front left hand bedroom
- 2) Middle box room
- 3) Front right hand bedroom
- 4) Master bedroom to rear left hand side with en-suite shower room
- 5) Family bathroom to rear right hand side

## **Outside Areas**

There are small gardens to the front and rear of the property, which is partly paved, partly grassed and has a large boundary wall around it. Please see our comments on this.

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

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## INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photos are of the internal of the property to help you recall what it looked like and the general ambience (or lack of). We have not necessarily taken photographs of each and every room.

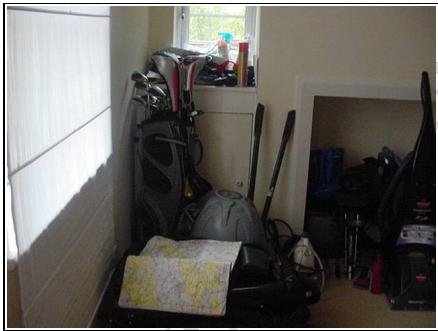
### Ground Floor



Entrance hallway



Rear lounge



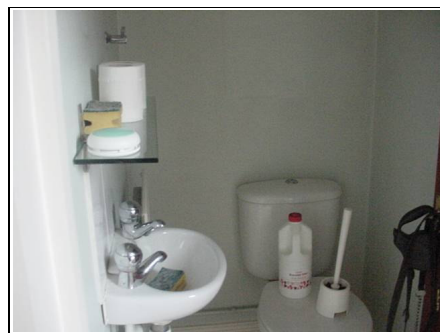
Front left hand reception room



Front right hand reception room



Kitchen



WC

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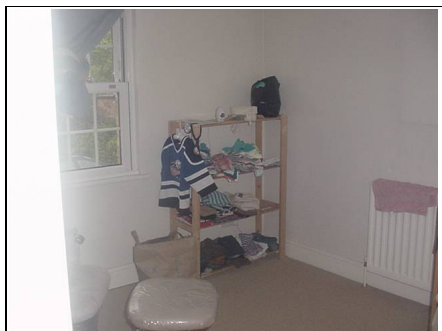
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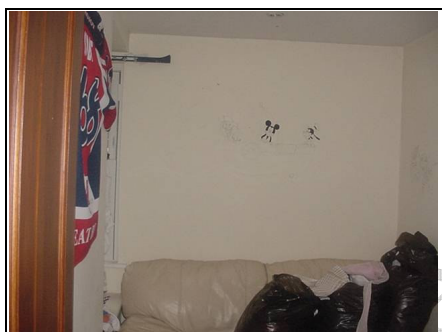
## **First Floor**



Front left hand bedroom



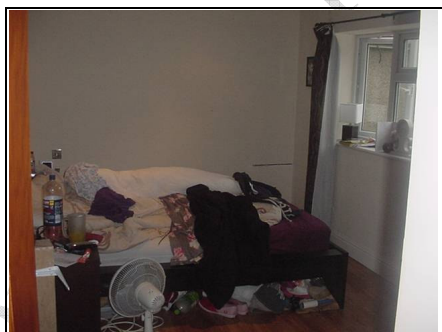
Front right hand bedroom



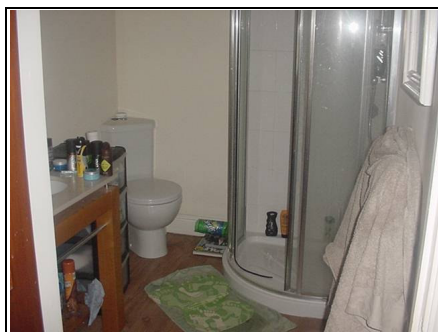
Middle box bedroom



Family bathroom



Master bedroom



En-suite shower room  
to master bedroom

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# **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

## **External**

Chimneys:	One central brick chimney
Main Roof:	Pitched, clad with concrete tiles, with a polycarbonate conservatory roof
Main Roof Structure:	Cut timber roof with new structural additions
Gutters and Downpipes:	Metal and plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic
Walls:	Painted sandstone / painted render, with some brickwork detailing (assumed)
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber
Windows and Doors:	Mixture of plastic double glazed windows, with and without trickle vents

## **Internal**

Ceilings:	Mixture of lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Mixture of solid (original external wall) and studwork (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Tiled on earth or similar (assumed)
First 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 electrics are in the front left hand reception room and are from the 1990s and the wall mounted Ideal combi gas boiler is located in the kitchen.

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 450 photographs during the course of this survey and many pages of notes, so if an issue has not been discussed that you are interested in or concerned about, please phone and talk to us before you purchase the property (or indeed commit to purchasing the property), as we will more than likely have noted it and be able to comment upon it; if we have not we will happily go back.

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

We consider this property a very high risk purchase and only to be taken on by those prepared to do a lot of work and have an understanding of older properties.

## **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 property also has some of the original features left, which add to the overall character of the property, such as the tiled floor.
- 2.0) It has an unusual layout as it was once two cottages that have been made into one and has been extended and altered over the years.
- 3.0) It has had a modern conservatory extension.
- 4.0) It has potential but needs a lot of work.

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

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## **The Bad**

*Problems / issues raised in the 'bad' section are usually solvable, but often need negotiation upon. However, a large number of them may sometimes put us off the property.*

### **1.0) Chimneys**

A property such as this originally would have had chimneys to every room, as it was the only way to heat them.

Chimneys have been removed and we can see to the left hand side there are some chimney breasts that remain in the roof. We feel that these have not been removed properly, which is why you have deflection in the floor due to the additional weight on the structure, as well as the timbers to the roof being smaller than we typically use today.

There would have been a chimney into every room, for example to the rear bedroom and rear reception room there is no chimney breast visible.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Each chimney will have to be examined carefully and the structure opened up to see if there is a chimney breast behind the walling and the chimneys to then either be supported or removed.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £2,000 to £6,000, depending upon the amount of work required. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Chimneys Section of the Report.



Chimney within the roof left hand side removed below



Dampness coming into chimney

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## 2.0) Main Roof

### Roof Tiles

The property has a concrete tile roof, replacing the original roof which is likely to have been tiles or slate. The concrete roof is much heavier than the original roof and as such there is additional weight on the roof.



Please see our comments on the roof structure below.

Chimney within the roof left hand side removed below

### Roof Timbers

The roof timbers are very old; in some areas we have what is known as pole timbers and quartered timbers, in other areas we have timbers that are much smaller than we typically see in roofs such as this. In addition to this we can see woodworm.



To the right hand side of the property the roof has had additional structural support added. This also needs to be added to the left hand side of the property. We would add that our view to both roofs was very limited as we could not get proper access.

Structural supports added to right hand side of roof



In addition to this, the roof needs to be vented to discourage the condensation and woodworm. We would reiterate our access was limited and we viewed the roofs mainly from the access hatches.

Woodworm on timber

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Additional structural support to be added to the left hand roof, the right hand roof to have the access hatch opened up and both roofs to have full woodworm treatment throughout and additional air vents.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £5,000 to £10,000, as we feel that additional strengthening timbers may be needed to the left hand roof. Please obtain quotations.

### **Hidden valley gutters**

The property has hidden valley gutters which can cause problems. We have not been able to view or access them but from our general knowledge of this type of construction they do tend to block.

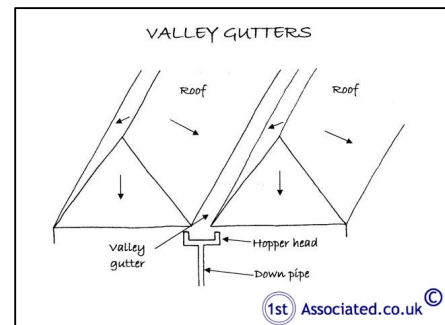
**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend a roof window is added to the main roof to allow viewing and access to the valley gutters for maintenance.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of a few hundred pounds to add the roof windows; please obtain quotes.

Please see the Roofs Section of this Report.



Valley gutters



### **3.0) Gutter problems**

The front gutter you have an unusual metal guttering that is rusting in places and also has a 50mm downpipe rather than a 100mm, which means it is likely to overflow during any reasonably heavy rain and discharge down the front of the property, which is why there is lateral dampness to the front of the property (or we are sure we would get readings for it if there was no dry lined wall – more about this later on in the report).

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Metal front gutter



Close up of 50mm downpipe

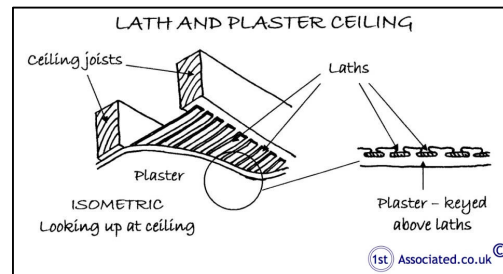
**ACTION REQUIRED:** Replace the guttering and downpipe with a deep flow gutter and 10mm downpipe.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £250 to 500; please obtain quotations.

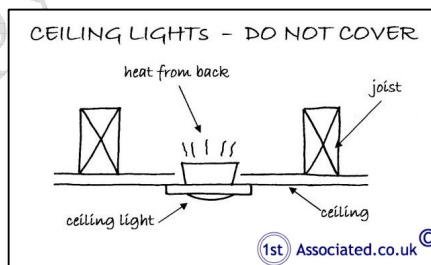
Please see the Gutters and Downpipes Section of this Report.

#### 4.0) Ceilings

We could see within the roof and also from the undulations within the ceilings that the lath and plaster may have lost its key in some areas.



In addition to this, we noticed that there are no caps on the lights which is a fire hazard.



Exposed electric wires  
– no caps on lights

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** It is very difficult to comment upon what to do with the ceiling as it has lost its key, which means you are likely to have to replace the ceiling almost any time these ceilings give way without warning, particularly given the high moisture levels that we found in the property (often the case where a young child, as in this case, lives in the house).

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £5,000 top £10,000 to replace the ceiling and approximately a few hundred pounds to add caps to the electric lights. Please obtain quotations.

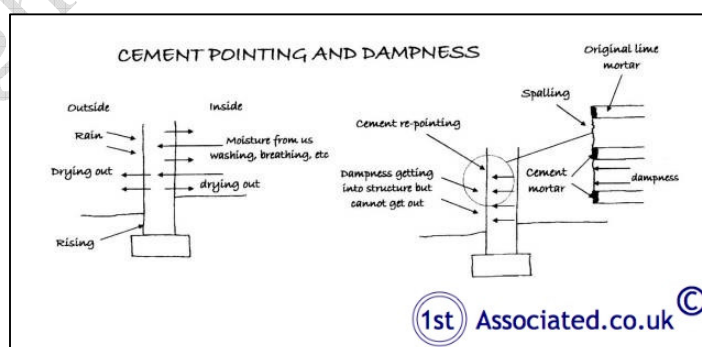
Please see the Ceilings Section of this Report.

## 5.0) Walls

The walls are constructed of a sandstone, which is reasonably common in the area with older properties. The sandstone to the front of the property where it is exposed has been wrongly repointed in cement mortar and therefore is deteriorating and ideally needs to be repointed in a lime mortar.



Sandstone to the front of the property



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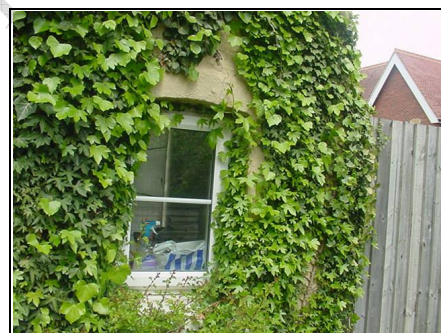
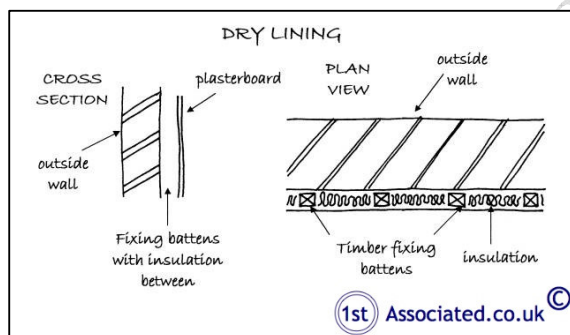
## Painted Sandstone

The property has had a plastic type paint sprayed on to it over some of the sandstone. This type of wall needs to breathe and without this deterioration can be caused and dampness.



Painted sandstone

In addition to this you have plants growing on the property which can add further to the dampness. The only reason we are not getting a lot of dampness readings inside is due to the dry lining.



Ivy on left hand side of property

## Cracks and movement to the walls

We can see cracks throughout the property indicating that there is movement. We think this relates to the defects in the roof we have mentioned and is not helped by the poor condition of the outer walls, as mentioned previously.

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Crack to front of property



Crack on right hand gable

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Existing owners to put in an insurance claim with regard to the movement and this to be obtained in writing and taken on by yourselves if you purchase the property, which we recommend against.

Please see the Walls and Dampness Sections of this Report.

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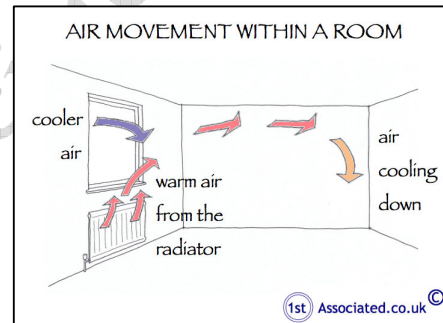
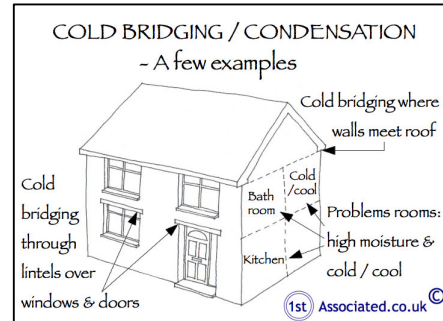
## 6.0) Condensation Warning

We feel the property has what we would term as having elements that are likely to mean there is more condensation; these are:

1. the mixed construction style with a dry lined wall
2. plastic windows
3. internal radiators,

And, from what we found during the course of the survey:

4. ineffective extract fans to the bathroom and shower room.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend adding extract fans that are humidity controlled to the bathroom, shower room and kitchen and we would recommend changing all the radiators so they are underneath the windows, however you do have to realise that condensation and cold bridging are a characteristic of this era of property. Please see our Cold Bridging article in the Appendices

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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## 7.0) Dampness

You have dampness throughout the property. This is for a combination of reasons:

1. We have already mentioned the smothering of the sandstone.
2. Lack of a damp proof course, which is common on this age of property.



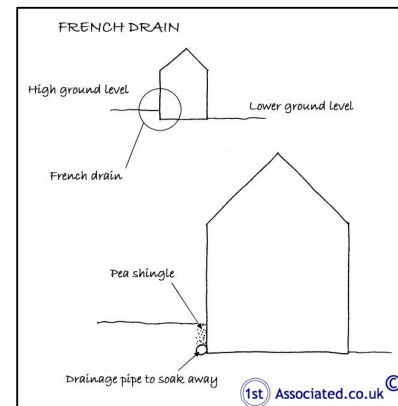
Checking for dampness

The main dampness we can see to the left hand side of the property.

We have mentioned the smothering of the sandstone with both the paint and the cement mortar and this needs to be allowed to breathe, and the lack of a damp proof course, which is common in this age of property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend with this age of property that a French drain is added. Please see our article in the Appendices.

We would just comment that the cellar was very damp but we would expect this in all properties of this age and would consider this a characteristic of the property.



Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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8.0) **No understanding of new and old construction and a mixing of new and old construction**

Unfortunately there does not seem to have been much knowledge or understanding of older properties from the builders that have carried out work on this property. In particular there is a mixture of old and new materials, for example the cement mortar repointing to the front of the property and the painting over of the sandstone, which do not help the property and then rather than resolving the damp problem it has been hidden by adding of the dry lining.

Please see the Walls Section of the Report.

**The Ugly**

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

We consider there are too many problems with this property to recommend purchasing it other than if you have a very good understanding of older properties.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

## **Maintenance**

A lot of work is required on this property to bring it up to a good standard. Maintenance can range from everything from replacing the front gutter and checking that the other gutters work. You have hidden valley gutters for example which can cause problems.

## **Services**

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

## **Electrics**

For the electrics we would recommend an Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) test and report carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent, which is recommended whenever a property changes occupancy. We would refer you in particular to the lights within the roofs.

## **Heating**

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. We would refer you to our comments with regard to the internal radiators.

## **Drainage**

We have lifted the manhole covers and can see a modern plastic manhole cover indicating that there has been work on the drains. Nevertheless the only true way to find out the condition of the drains is to have a closed circuit TV camera report to establish the condition of the drains. In this age of property there have often been leaks over the years.



## **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**

If you do intend to carry out DIY/handyman type work then we would recommend that you go on a course by The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) on the maintenance of old properties. Often good intended DIY can cause more problems and de-value a property than it can cause good.

## **Purchase Price**

We have not been asked to comment upon the purchase price in this instance, we have however referred you to sources of general information on the housing market within the Information on the Property Market Section, which can be found in the Appendices at the end of the Report.

## **Every Business Transaction has a Risk**

Every business transaction has a risk, only you can assess whether that risk is acceptable to you and your circumstances. You should now read the main body of the Report paying particular attention to any “**ACTION REQUIRED**” points.

## **Estimates of Building Costs**

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour and estimates can of course vary from area to area when giving a general indication of costs. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £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:

The building has lots of character, however the work that has been carried out on it has been poorly thought through and major work is now required. We feel this is too much work to be carried out by someone who is not used to developing such properties and we strongly recommend against purchasing this property.

As a general comment if you do decide to purchase this property then we recommend any work required that you obtain at least three quotations 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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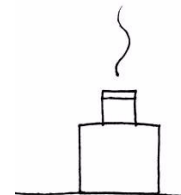
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## EXTERNAL

### CHIMNEY STACKS

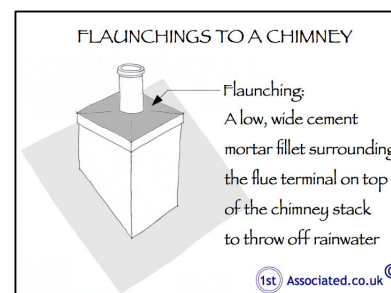


*Chimneys developed originally from open fires placed within buildings. From this, the chimney has developed to its present day format where it is used as an aesthetic feature and focal point rather than purely just to heat the room.*

There is one chimney to this property, located to the middle of the property. Originally it would have had chimneys to every room and we can see that many of the chimneys have been removed. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary as we do not think they have been removed properly.

The one chimney that we can see is brick built with a lead flashing and one chimney pot. From what we could see from ground level it looked in average condition externally considering its age, type and style, however internally it looks as if there is dampness getting in one way or another.

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



Close up of top



Close up of base

**ACTION REQUIRED:** This chimney needs to be closely inspected. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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#### 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.

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

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

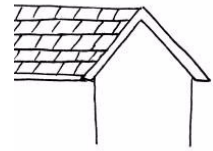
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# **ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS**



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

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

## **Main Roof**

The main roof is pitched and clad with concrete tiles and, from ground level, this looks in average condition. We would imagine the original roof was slate and was replaced with this concrete roof in the 1960s/1970s; this type of roof is much heavier than the original roof.

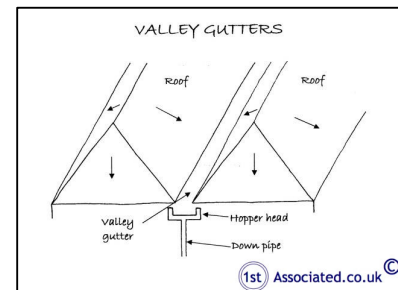


Concrete roof tiles

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary about structural problems with regard to the roof.

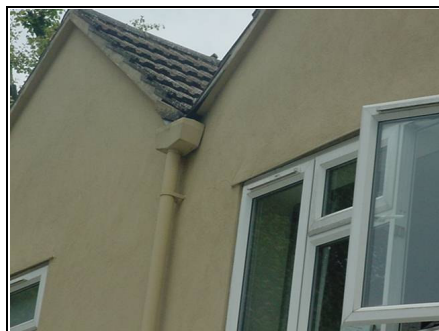
## **Valley Gutters**

The property has two valley gutters. Please see the adjacent sketch of the valley gutter. We cannot detect any problems with these but then the walls are dry lined so this would effectively be hiding any problems.





Concrete roof tiles



Close up of valley gutter

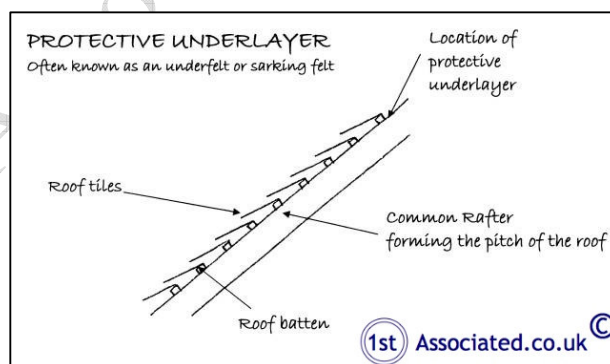


Other valley gutter to rear

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary where we recommend roof windows are added to allow the viewing of the condition of the valley gutters.

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

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



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



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

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## Conservatory Roof

A conservatory has been added to the rear of the property. We were pleased to see that there was a lead flashing where it met the main building and there were no obvious signs of dampness getting through internally, although we would comment that there was a lot of rainwater going on to the roof from the main roofs. We often find this is the case where properties have been amended and extended, where there has been little thought as to how the rainwater gets away from the roof.

This conservatory has a polycarbonate roof which looks in average condition, although we do find that these polycarbonate roofs do tend to leak sooner or later, particularly where they are against an older property such as this, where there is some movement in the property which is part of the natural process in an older property.



Polycarbonate conservatory roof



Gutter may overflow if too much water gets on to the 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 thirty 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.

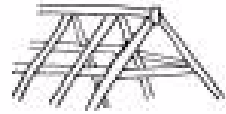
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# ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT



## (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 two loft hatches; one located in the left hand bedroom and one located in the right hand bedroom. There is a loft ladder to the left hand hatch but the right hand hatch is very small and awkward.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend the right hand hatch is opened up properly and a loft ladder added, together with adding proper lighting to both roofs.

The lofts have been viewed by torch light from the access hatches which has limited our viewing.

#### Roof Structure

This property has an older style roof structure. Many of the timbers are from times before we cut and squared our timbers properly; we can see many of the timbers in the roof have bark on them still, known as pole timbers, and we can also see many quartered timbers.



Bark on the timber  
– known as pole timbers



Quartered timbers

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There have been replacement cut timbers added over the years, together with structural supports added to the right hand roof.

We can also see roof timbers smaller than we would normally expect, and we can also see woodworm.

### 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

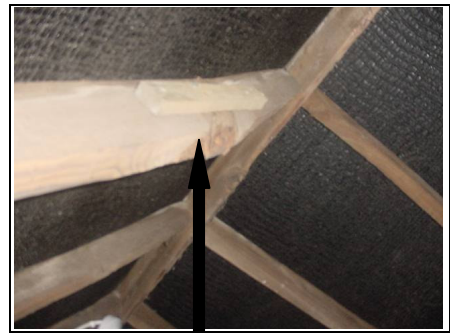
#### Left hand roof photos



General view of left hand roof



Close up of timbers, additional supports already added



Common rafter broken and has been patch repaired

#### Right hand roof photos



Right hand side roof  
– structural supports



New purlins

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would refer you to our comments in the Executive Summary – these roofs are in poor condition. Ideally we would recommend the entirety of the concrete roof is removed, the timbers are checked and replaced and repaired as necessary and a new lightweight roof is put on, such as a slate roof or manmade slate roof.

### **Ventilation**

There is a lack of ventilation in the roof.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Add vents to help reduce condensation and dampness.

### **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.

Our main concern was the ceiling lights that were literally lighting up the roof space on the left hand side which have no caps on the top of them

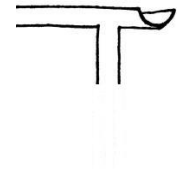
**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary and Services Section of this Report.

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.

## **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**

This property has been amended and extended over the years and little thought has been given to the gutters and downpipes. We mentioned in the Executive Summary about the metal gutter to the front with the small downpipe, there are also awkward 90° joints to the downpipes and there are also the awkward valley gutters to the roofs.



90° awkward joint on downpipe

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. The whole of the gutters and downpipes need to be reviewed. We would start by recommending that you stand outside the property next time it rains heavily and see how well the drains cope with the rainwater particularly looking at the guttering and the joints (not that we are recommending purchasing the property).

We would also say initially that the gutters and downpipes should be cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes.

### **Soil and Vent Pipe**

The soil and vent pipes are plastic and have been amended and altered over the years. To the rear of the property we can see what looks like repairs with black tape (see photo), although nothing leaked out of them when we flushed the WC, etc.



Plastic 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 sandstone with some brickwork detailing and some rendering.

## Sandstone

The sandstone has been wrongly repointed in a cement mortar and needs to be repointed in a lime based mortar. This is causing dampness and deterioration to the stonework.



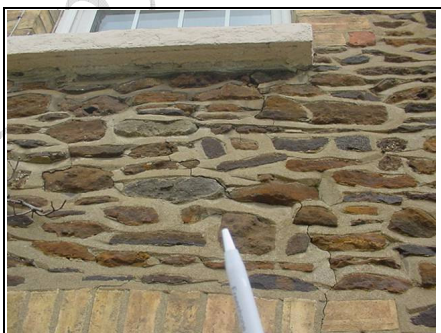
Sandstone wrongly repointed in cement mortar



Pen indicates where cement mortar is breaking away

## Cracking

We would remind you that any hairline cracks that appear need to be sealed as soon as possible to stop dampness and water getting in and causing blisters and hollow areas.



Cracks to front of property



Splitting of the two cottages

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Cracks to front of property

Some of the sandstone has been painted over.

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



Close up of painted sandstone

## Render

There is render to the right hand side and rear of the property. This is a modern cement render which is not ideal for an older property and will tend to crack and you need to ensure that these cracks are sealed.



Render

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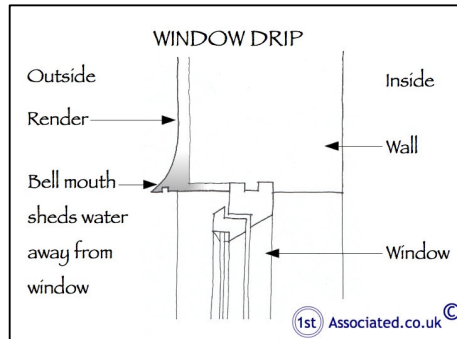


## Render Detailing

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

### Window drip detail

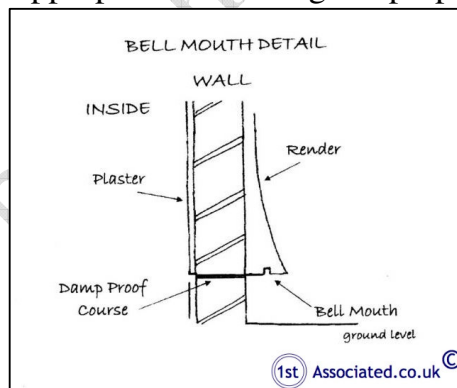
In this case we found a drip detail over the windows.



Drip detail over window

### Bell mouth to base of property

To the base of the render there was a bell mouth detail. It is not ideal as it does not turn up as much as would like but is certainly better than nothing. Overall the rendering is well detailed, unfortunately it is in a hard cement mortar which is not appropriate for this age of property.



Bell mouth detail

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## **Painted render/painted sandstone walls**

Do not underestimate the amount of time/cost it will take to repaint the property particularly as there is high level work which is likely to need scaffolding which can be expensive.

## **Bonding Timbers**

In properties of this age sometimes bonding timbers were used. These are timbers within a structure that were added to help support it, however the bonding timbers can rot over time and cause damage. We did not physically see any of these but then the entirety of the inside of the property has been hidden by dry lining.

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 sandstone / painted sandstone / painted render / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels, rubbed brick lintels, stone 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 sandstone / painted sandstone / painted render / plasterwork has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the sandstone / painted sandstone / painted render / plasterwork would be if it were opened up for this age, style and type of construction. We are however aware that all is not always as it seems in the building industry and often short cuts are taken. Without opening up the structure we have no way of establishing this.

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# **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 the original property to have a very shallow foundation (excepting the cellar area of course) built off the sandstone.

To the rear the conservatory is likely to have a modern concrete pad foundation. There may also have been concrete or brick foundations used for the rear extension of the building.

This area is rich in minerals and sand is usually what is found under these types of buildings, however there are also pockets of clay as nearby Bedford is as famous for its brick as Leighton Buzzard is for its sand.

## **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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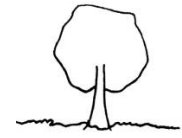
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# TREES

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

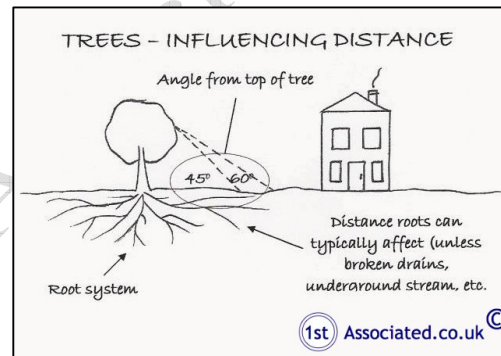
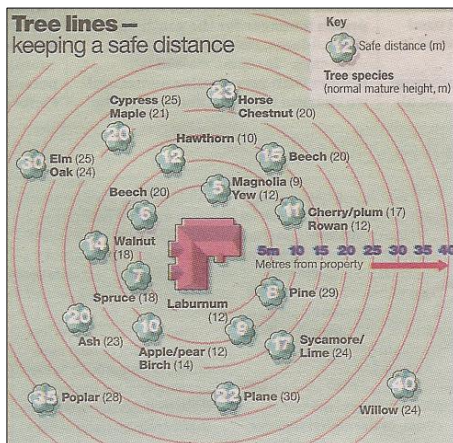


There is a substantial tree to the right hand side which may be within what insurance companies refer to as influencing distance of the property. We as a surveyor do not feel the tree roots are likely to have significant affect on the property providing the tree is maintained, however insurance companies may have a different view on this.



Tree across access road

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Contact the insurance company; ideally stay with the existing insurance company.



## 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 will incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and in older properties good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In older building properties of this age they are unlikely to have a DPC.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary about adding a French drain around the property to help reduce the dampness.

To some extent the dampness is hidden in the property by the dry lining. The main areas we found dampness was to the right hand side of the property, but this is only because these are areas where the walls are exposed as opposed to hidden by dry lining.

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

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

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# **AIR VENTS**

## **Low Level Air Vents**

The cellar is vented. Cellars will always be damp as they are below ground and therefore ideally there should be a vent on several sides of the cellar. This has been blocked in years gone by the rear extension. We would suggest opening up a vent within the left hand side of the property, although as stated elsewhere within this report we would not recommend buying this property so it is academic.



Air vent to cellar

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.

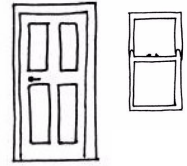
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# **FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS**



*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**

You have a mixture of fascias and soffits, which also help us date the property. To the front we have a traditional fascia and soffit, to the rear we have a vented fascia and soffit that have been in existence for approximate thirty years so you should be able to find details with regard to the rear extension of the property.



Vented soffit on extension

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Make sure gutters and downpipes are watertight before carrying out any work on fascias and soffits.

## **Windows and Doors**

The property has plastic double glazed windows with some trickle vents, which generally look to be of a average quality for their age, type and style, however many surveyors will argue that as they have not got trickle vents they are in below average condition, and they are certainly causing argument with regard to ventilation of the property and condensation..



Window without trickle vent

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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.

#### Trickle Vents Defined

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

#### **Window guarantees**

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.

Finally, we have carried out a general and random inspection of the external joinery. In the case of the fascias and soffits it is typically a visual inspection from ground level. With the windows and doors we have usually opened a random selection of these during the course of the survey. In this section we are aiming to give a general overview of the condition of the external joinery. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

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## **EXTERNAL DECORATIONS**



*The external decorations act as a protective coat for the building from the elements. Where this protective covering has failed, such as with flaking paintwork, the elements will infiltrate the structure. This is of particular concern as water is one of the major factors in damage to any structure.*

There is a lot of external decoration to this property. It is a great shame that the sandstone has been painted over, although we know this is fairly common it does stop the sandstone from breathing and causes dampness. The painted render will be a fairly large task when this needs to be redecorated and we would expect redecoration in the summer of 2014. It may be worth carrying this out with any other major works where scaffolding is in use or the purchasing of your own tower scaffold to save money on the high level painting.



Example of a tower scaffold

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



## CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

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

### Ceilings

From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction we believe that the ceilings are lath and plaster and they look to have lost their key from our investigations in the roof.

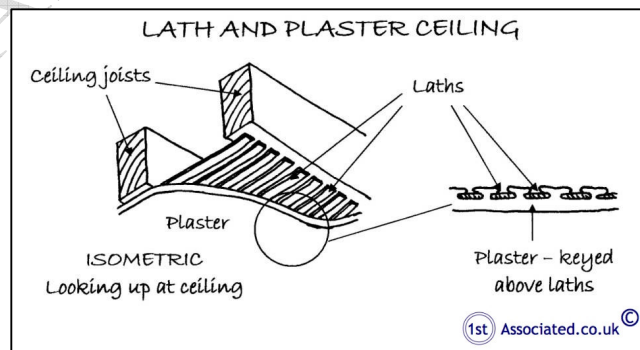
There are some newer areas in plaster and we suspect that some of the lath and plaster has been plaster boarded over.



Beams on ceiling in right hand reception room

#### 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.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. We would anticipate future work to the ceilings.

## **Internal Walls and Partitions**

These are, we believe a mixture of solid and studwork construction, for example the solid walls are those which used to be the dividing walls between the two cottages and then the studwork walls have been added as the property has been reconfigured. It is of course impossible to determine the construction without opening up the walls and we have therefore taken an educated guess.



Crack in bathroom wall

## **Perimeter Walls**

We cannot access many of the perimeter walls as they have been dry lined. Again we cannot be 100% certain of the wall construction without opening them up which goes beyond the scope of this report.

## **Movement cracks within the plaster**

To the master bedroom we can see cracking over the window. This does indicate to us that there is structural problems with this property.

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



Crack over window in master bedroom

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

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

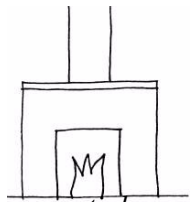
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# CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



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

You only have one chimney at the top of the property but at one time all the rooms would have had chimneys and chimney breasts to keep them warm. We believe that some of the chimneys have been removed without being fully removed.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to investigate each chimney in turn to check that it is still all in place. We suspect the chimneys on the left hand side have been partially removed and need to be fully removed.

Central fireplace – we were told this does not work

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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

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

# 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

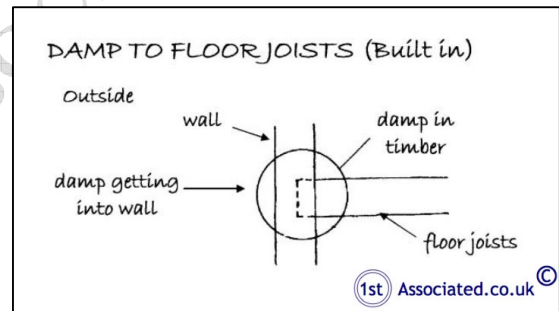
There are terracotta tiles in many areas indicating this property is pre-Victorian. The newer areas are firm under foot, assumed to be a concrete floor.



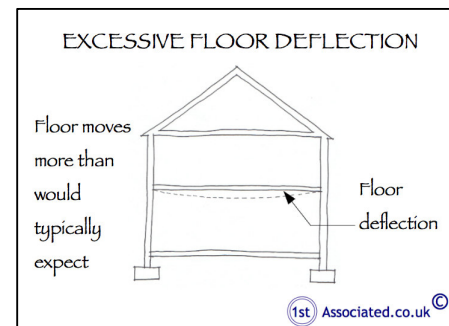
Old quarry tiles

## First Floor

The first floor deflected much more than we are happy with. We believe this is due to embedded timbers and, given the deflection in the floor we feel, the smaller timbers used than we normally come across and / or the embedded timbers are getting damp and deteriorating.



In addition to this, it should be appreciated that the floor timbers help give lateral restraint to the property and as these have deteriorated this can contribute towards bellying in a property, together with the cracking on the front of the property with the heavier roof and the lack of lateral resistance from the floor is part of the reason why the property is moving.



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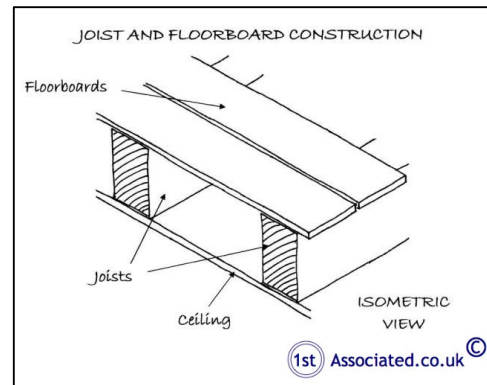
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### Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

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

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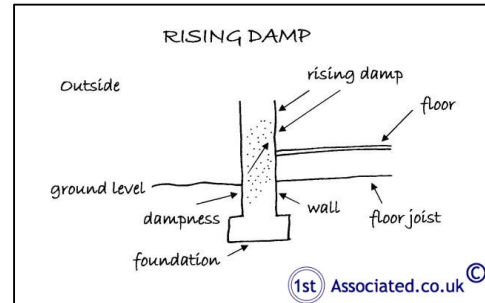
# DAMPNESS



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

## Rising Damp

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



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

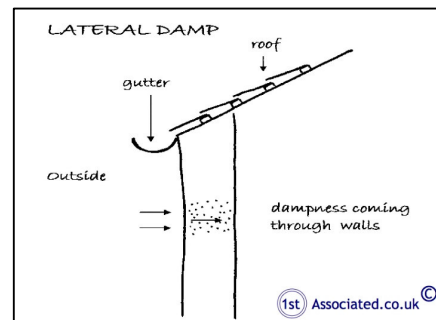
**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see the Executive Summary.



Checking for rising damp  
in the kitchen

## 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 would have found dampness but the property is dry lined so we were unable to test for lateral dampness in most areas.

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



Trying to test for lateral dampness

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## **Condensation**

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

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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

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

Although there are extracts in some of the humidity creating areas we would recommend larger extract fans within the kitchen, bathroom and the en-suite shower room. Humidity controlled extract fans are a way of helping to reduce condensation is to have good large extract fans within the kitchens and bathrooms which are moisture generating areas.



Extract in lounge

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

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**

There is a mixture of doors including this older style plank door into the cellar area.



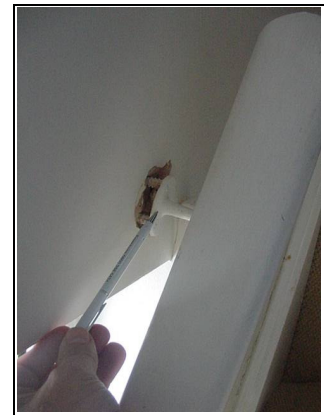
Plank door to cellar

## **Staircase**

There are two staircases to the property; one of them is hidden and can be seen as you go down into the cellar, the other one is the central modern staircase, which is lined. We could see general maintenance is needed as the handrail needs to be put back on.



Old stairs left hand side closed off. We can see the back of these going into the cellar



Hand rail coming away

## **Kitchen**

We found the kitchen in average condition and is relatively new. We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

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

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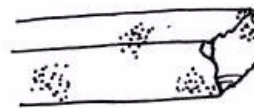
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## **TIMBER DEFECTS**

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



### **Dry Rot**

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

We have not visually seen any dry rot during the course of our inspection. We would advise that we have not opened up the floors 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 believe there is wet rot in the roof, probably caused by condensation.

### **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 woodworm activity or indeed signs of past woodworm activity that has caused what we would term 'structurally significant' damage. In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active. Our inspection is usually restricted by insulation covering some of the timbers and general



Woodworm in timber 57

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stored items in the roof, as it is restricted throughout the property by general fixtures and fittings.

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

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 condition, or as we would expect in a tenanted property. You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste.

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

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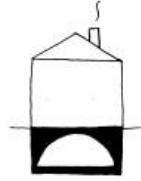
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## CELLARS AND VAULTS

*Cellars and vaults tend to be found in older properties and offer a useful space, although usually they are damp, unless some treatment has taken place such as the tanking of the walls, which is a lining process, or an external damp proofing membrane of some type has been added, or if internally the walls have been lined, therefore hiding the damp. Cellars are often susceptible to flooding from excessive rain, rising water table levels or even blocked drains.*



The cellar is full of stored items, nevertheless we could see there was dampness in as we would expect and we certainly would not store any cherished items within the cellar.

### Sump Pump

We do like to see a sump pump but could not see one in this instance. These are useful for when the cellar gets flooded, which is bound to happen with our variable climate, particularly with all the rain we have had during May for example, which we believe is record breaking.



Cellar full of stored items



Part of lath and plaster ceiling coming down



Obtaining damp readings of 93



Briquettes on floor



Brick steps coming out of cellar

Finally, we have made a visual inspection of the cellar/vault only and have no way of knowing what the construction is without opening up the structure.

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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 there was 100mm to 200mm. Care should be taken about adding more insulation as we believe condensation is already occurring in the roof.

## **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 double glazed and therefore will have reasonable thermal properties, unfortunately most do not have trickle vents.

## **Services**

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

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## Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average compared with what we typically see for this age, type and style of property.

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

*HTTP//www.est.org.uk, which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*

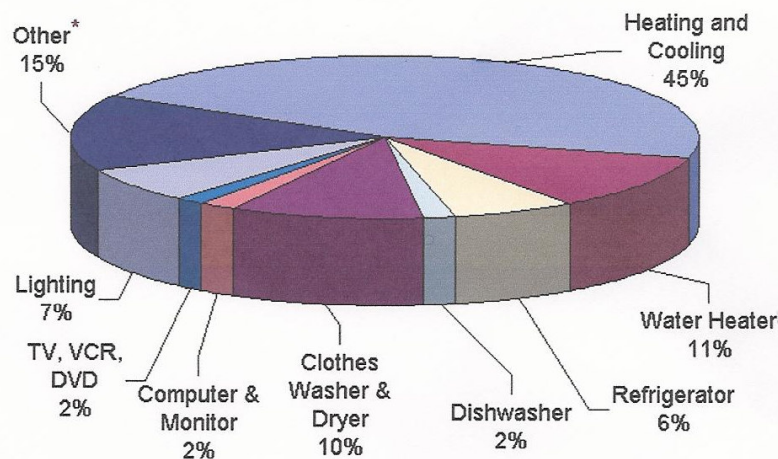
*or alternatively [www.cat.org.uk](http://www.cat.org.uk)*

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

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

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

What does my energy bill pay for?



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

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## **OTHER MATTERS**



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

### **Security**

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

### **Fire / Smoke Alarms**

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

**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**

There may be some asbestos in a property of this age that has now been hidden. We did not see any during the course of our survey.

Asbestos was commonly used post war until it was banned only in the last ten or so years, although it is rumoured that it was still used after this point in time. 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 electric fuses and consumer units were located in the front left hand reception room and look to be from the 1990s and far better are now available.



Fuse Board

## **Earth Test**

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



Earth Test

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

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary regarding the lights in the ceiling.

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

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

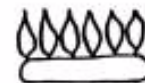
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*There is very little we can check for in a gas installation, we do inspect to make sure there is one and that it has a consumer unit and that the boilers are vented. Ideally you should have a service inspection carried out by an independent Gas Safe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

We are advised that the property has mains gas, located in the kitchen. 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

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

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

## Water Pressure

When the taps were run to carry out the drainage test we checked the pressure literally by putting a finger over the tap and this seemed average. The Water Board have to guarantee a certain pressure of water to ensure that things like boilers, particularly the instantaneous ones have a constant supply of pressured water (they would blow up if they didn't!).

## Cold Water Cistern

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

## Plumbing

The plumbing, where visible, comprises copper piping, although given the alterations and additions to the property we would expect to find some plastic plumbing too. No significant leakage was noted on the surface, although most of the pipework is concealed in floors, walls and ducts.



## **Heating**

The wall mounted combi boiler was located in the kitchen cupboard, it is manufactured by Ideal.

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.



Ideal wall mounted boiler

## **Ten Minute Heating Test**

There was no need to ask for a ten minute heating test as the property was very, very warm during the course of our survey.

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.

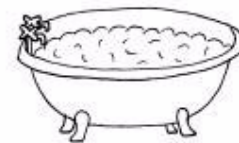
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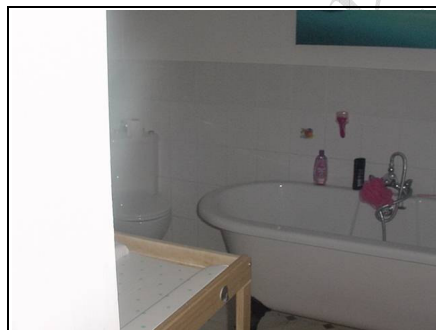
# **BATHROOM**



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

## **Bathrooms**

The property has a four piece bathroom suite bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, together with an en-suite shower room to the master bedroom. They are both relatively new. At the time of our inspection they had just been used and there was a lot of condensation in the area.



Bathroom

Please see our comments about large humidity controlled extract fans.

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

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## MAIN DRAINS



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

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

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

### Inspection Chambers / Manholes

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

We have identified two inspection chamber / manhole.

#### Manholes Defined

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

### Inspection Chamber / Manhole One, located rear right hand side

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

From what we could see it is brick built.



Manhole

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### **Inspection Chamber / Manhole Two, located rear left hand side**

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

From what we could see it is plastic. We assume this has been added relatively recently.



Manhole

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

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

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

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

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

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

## OUTSIDE AREAS

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

### PARKING

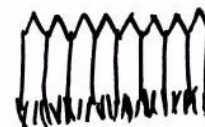


There is off road parking via the car port to the rear, although at the time of our survey it was full of stored items.



Car port

### EXTERNAL AREAS



#### Front Garden

The property has a small front garden. We were quite surprised how fast the traffic flows by this property.



Front Garden

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## **Rear Garden**

A smallish rear garden, with a patio and grassed area, surrounded by a large brick wall. We were surprised there were not any expansion joints in the brick wall and would be concerned that there may be movement to this.



Rear Garden



Patio area



Wall does not have any expansion joints in it

**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**

### **Rear Neighbours**

We spoke to the rear neighbour who advised that the properties were a new build and they were happy in the cul-de-sac.

### **Developer**

We also spoke to the agent for the developer who advised that they had brought the property to carry out the development.

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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) Cavity walls (possibly to the rendered areas) insulation and cavity wall tie repairs.
  - iv) Double glazing or replacement windows.
  - v) Roof and similar renewals.
  - vi) Central heating installation.
  - vii) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
  - viii) Removal of any walls in part or whole.
  - ix) Removal of any chimneys in part or whole.
  - x) Any other matters pertinent to the property.
- d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.
- e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.
- f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.
- g) Adjoining roads and services.
- h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.
- i) General development proposals in the locality.

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

However, with regard to Envirosearch or similar general reports please see our article link on the [www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk) Home Page.

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

## **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.

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 cool 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:

as we have not had as good an access to the roof as we would have liked.

as we were not able to open up the first floor.

as we did not have the benefit of talking to the owners or them answering our usual question and answers.

as the cellar was full of stored items which limited our view

## **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.



## INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[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

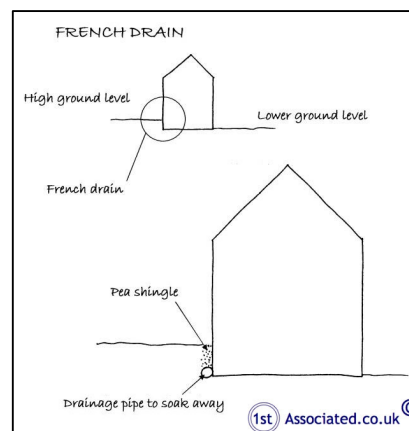
## Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

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.

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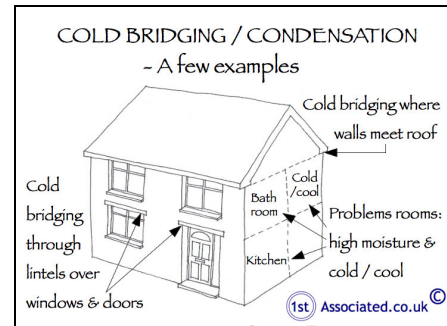
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## Certain types of buildings are more susceptible to Condensation and Cold Bridging

Here is our sketch on Cold Bridging

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



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

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

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



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

### To give you some examples of Cold Bridging

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



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

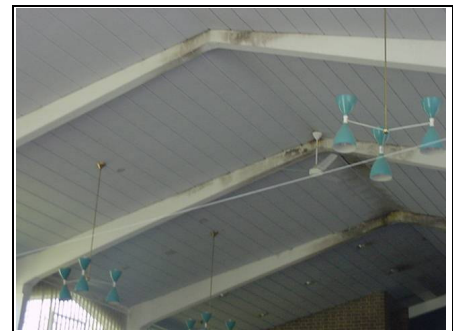


A close up view showing there is a concrete lintel over the door and window. This is where the cold bridging occurs causing condensation inside.

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

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

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



Cold Bridging in a commercial property with a concrete frame.

## When is Cold Bridging Likely?

In our experience we have seen cold bridging occurring in

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

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

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

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



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



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



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

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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.

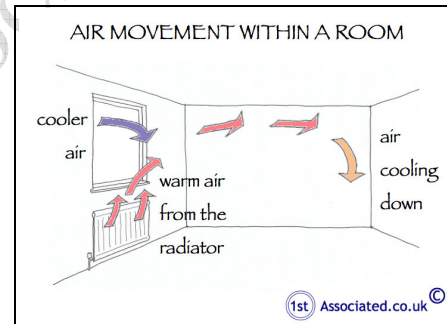


This meant they were warmer which has meant the significance of a lintel, over a door or window, being colder and allowing the transfer of coldness becomes much more important. This results in condensation that we commonly see above windows in this age and era of property.

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

### How to solve Cold Bridging

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



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

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



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

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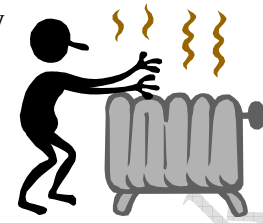
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## Is your life style a factor in Cold Bridging?

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



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

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

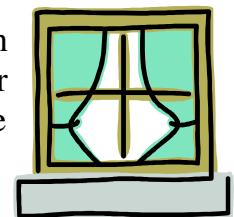
This is where you employ someone who is a specialist within a field, such as us as Chartered Building Surveyors, who comment on problems of condensation within the property. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation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



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

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

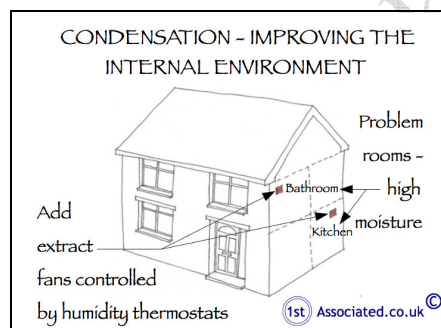
This really is a difficult question to answer. We have been involved in a number of cases as expert witnesses or advocates and the answer can vary. We would comment that there are factors that can be changed and factors that can't be changed. For example, the occupiers lifestyle can in most cases be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



the occupier having an understanding of the problems they are causing. For example, drying lots of washing on a radiator inside may be causing excessive moisture in the atmosphere. Equally not opening the windows and closing or sealing up vents can be a problem.

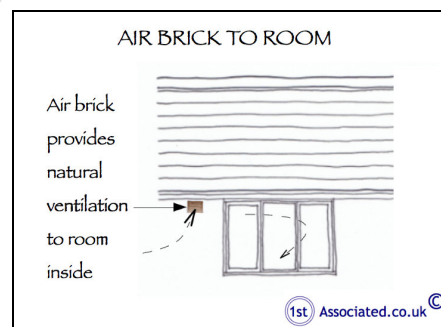
## Design of the Building

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



## Things to remember about an air brick

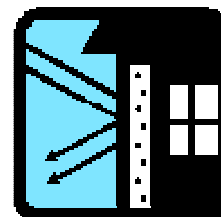
If you are thinking about adding an air brick then you need to be aware that airbricks don't actually allow that much air through. Although externally a nine by three air brick has a lot of gaps, as these gaps taper, it is generally considered that only about one inch square of air regularly passes through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



Air brick may not ventilate room enough

## What's happening in brand new housing?

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



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

### **In the winter we have condensation problems but in the summer we don't**

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



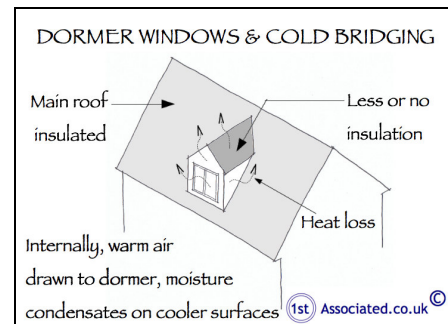
Sliding sash windows can swell in the winter months

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

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

### **Extensions and Cold Bridging**

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



## **A more technical answer**

The above article has been written to stimulate debate and discussion. However we are aware from our experience of dealing with these problems, especially when they get into court, that it can be a very emotional subject. We have come across the terms Chronic Damp Conditions and Chronic Condensation Conditions. There is clearly a mismatch in these situations between the building and the lifestyle of the person within. We have come across buildings which have a relative humidity exceeding seventy per cent most of the time and where mould growth can become established. Whilst this is at the extreme end of what we see, it is of course a concern if you are the landlord or tenant with this issue.

## **Here are some references for you**

Landlord and Tenant act 1985 - [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70](http://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (known fondly as the HHSRS) - [hhsrs.org](http://hhsrs.org)

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