

JOB REFERENCE: XXXX

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

**XXXX**  
**Berkhamsted,**  
**Hertfordshire.**  
**HP4 XXX**



FOR

**Mrs X**

Prepared by:  
INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

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 property in a residential area of similar style properties. A conservatory has been added to the rear in 1999.

We are advised by the owners that the property was built in the 1970s and the date of the conservatory. 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:*

1966	England wins the World Cup
1970	Decimalisation
Early 1970s	British Property Boom
1972	First email program invented by Ray Tomlinson
1973	Britain enters the European Economic Community
1976	The first commercial Concorde flight took off
1977	Elvis Presley died
1978-1979	The Winter of Discontent

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## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front View



Rear View



Left hand view



Right hand view



Conservatory



Rear garden

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## **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

(All directions given as you face the property)

### **Ground Floor**

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance hall
- 2) Through lounge (left hand side)
- 3) Dining Room
- 4) Kitchen (rear right hand side)
- 5) Study
- 6) Utilities Room
- 7) Access to garage

### **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 8) Master Bedroom with en suite (front left hand side)
- 9) Double Bedroom (rear left hand side)
- 10) Double Bedroom (middle)
- 11) Double Bedroom (right hand side)
- 12) Double Bedroom (front) currently being used as an office
- 13) Family Bathroom (right hand side)

### **Outside Areas**

There is a reasonable sized garden at the front of the property although much of it is given over to a driveway for off road parking and a reasonable sized garden to the rear laid predominately to lawn.

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



Lounge towards front



Lounge towards rear



Entrance Hall



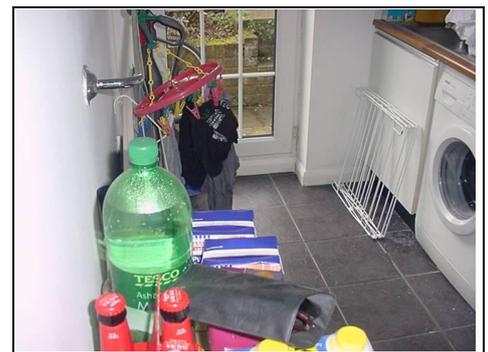
Study



Dining Room



Kitchen



Utility room

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Conservatory

**First Floor**



Master Bedroom



En suite to master bedroom



Rear left hand Bedroom



Middle Bedroom



Rear right hand Bedroom



Landing



Front bedroom used as study

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## **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

Please note this is not a traditional built property but a modern timber frame property.

### **External**

Chimneys:	Two brick chimneys
Main Roof:	Pitched, clad with concrete tile
Flat Roof:	Felt
Roof Structure:	Prefabricated truss
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic
Walls:	Stretcher Bond Brickwork (assumed)
Fascias, Soffits and Bargeboards:	Painted timber and plastic
Windows and Doors:	Plastic double glazed windows

### **Internal**

Ceilings:	Plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Mixture of solid and hollow (assumed)
Perimeter Walls:	Gypsum plaster (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Solid underfoot (assumed) Joist and floorboards (assumed)
First Floor:	

### **Services**

We are advised (by the owner) that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas. The floor mounted boiler is manufactured by Potterton and located off the kitchen and vented via the garage and the electrics are 1960s and located in the garage.

The above terms are explained in full in the main body of the Report.

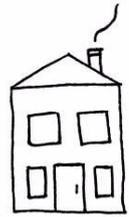
We have used the term 'assumed' as we have not opened up the structure.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Summaries are not ideal as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs. This is particularly so in a summary about someone's future home when we are trying to second-guess what their priorities are, so it is important the Report is read in full.

It is inevitable with a report on a building of this nature that some of the issues we have focussed in on you may dismiss as irrelevant and some of the areas that we have decided are part of the 'character' of this property you may think are very important. We have taken in the region of 250 photographs during the course of this survey and many pages of notes, so if an issue has not been discussed that you are interested in or concerned about, please phone and talk to us before you purchase the property (or indeed commit to purchasing the property), as we will more than likely have noted it and be able to comment upon it; if we have not we will happily go back.

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

### **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 is conveniently located.
- 2.0) The property has potential.

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

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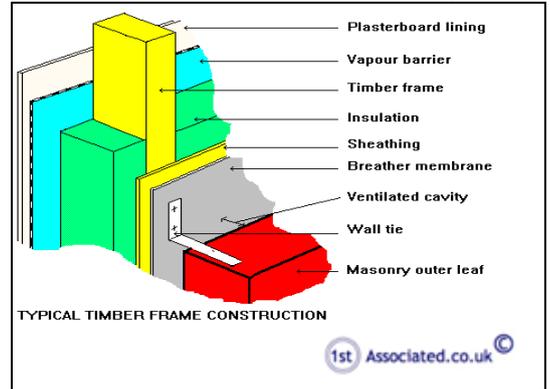
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## The Bad

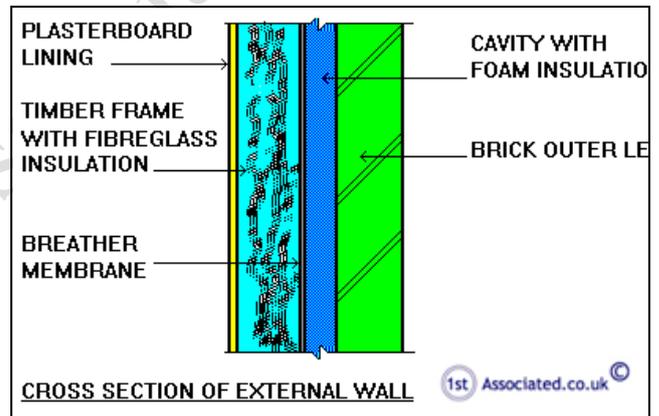
*Problems / issues raised in the 'bad' section are usually solvable, but often need negotiation upon. However, a large number of them may sometimes put us off the property.*

### 1.0) 1970s modern timber frame construction

This property is built in a system known as timber frame construction and was built during the early days of modern timber frame construction. This is a period when we would say the construction industry was learning, for want of a better term, how to build in this style.



There are a vast range of opinions on modern timber framed properties if you speak to anyone in the timber frame industry they will say that this type of construction has been used for many decades. However we would say, that from our understanding (although we were not surveying at the time these properties were built) the British Construction Industry was at best confused about how to build in this system at worst it was in a chaotic state. Please see the article we have appended to this document that explains the situation fully.



Timber lining of timber frame

The problems with the British Construction Industry and modern timber framed buildings were highlighted by a World in Action independent television programme stressing the poor construction practices. The World in Action programme on timber frame structures effectively

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brought the public's attention to the timber frame market down and resulted in a backlash against it with many timber frame companies ceasing to trade and a move back to traditional building construction techniques.

During the course of our survey on this specific property our only indication that this property is a modern timber frame structure is the timber cladding that can be seen in the roof to the gable ends and the perimeter walls when tapped being hollow which you may find in a modern property but not normally one of this age. You have to consider all these factors as a characteristic of this modern timber framed properties style and without major work this cannot be changed.

## 2.0) Movement

To the rear of the property where the French doors are and the adjacent window; we can see there has been some movement around the window areas. This can often occur where double glazing from the cheaper end of the market has been used where the plastic windows have not been reinforced or measured particularly well therefore not fitting in properly the wall above settles onto the new window/door level.



Movement to brickwork to rear French doors

This is normally amended by packing (which is formed by fitting around the window small pieces of plastic or timber wedges), in this instance we assume this has not happened and the wall has moved leaving the cracks.



Cracking above window

**ACTION REQUIRED:** There is very little that needs to be done with this type of cracking from a structural point of view however aesthetically some people do try to re-point the brickwork. We would advise unless

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the re-pointing is carried out very well and the new mortar colour is matched against the mortar original poor re-pointing can stand out more than the cracking itself. Unfortunately we often find that making good makes the movement cracking look worse therefore we would recommend leaving this in its current condition.

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

### 3.0) Flat roof is flat

The flat roof over the garage and over the front covered area and rear is very flat with moss sitting on it; it should typically have a fall of fifteen degrees, moss sitting on it indicates that the fall is not sufficient to take the rainwater away. When we spoke to the owners about this during our question and answer session they advised that they had not had any problems over the years. When we inspected the underside of the garage roof the damp staining that we did note we were advised had been there since they moved into the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend you clear the moss off the roof and set aside a budget to carry out repair work. We also would note

that the flashing has been formed in felt and prefer to see this in lead.



Moss on flat front roof



Moss on flat garage roof



Looking up at timber of the flat roof

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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.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** To have a new flashing we would expect costs in the region of £300 - £1000 and would expect ad hoc repairs to be carried out from time to time; please obtain quotations.



Lead flashing

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

**4.0) Over-cladding to bargeboards and possibly to fascias and soffits**

We were only able to obtain a close inspection of the fascias and soffits and bargeboards from the roof level and here we could see that they were plastic but it is not clear if they are solid plastic or over-cladding. Where plastic has been added over the top of the original timber fascias, soffits or bargeboards often it is due to them being in poor condition. Ironically the plastic then causes the timber to degrade more so it is not an ideal way of carrying out this work. The correct way is to replace them in the entirety.



Over-clad bargeboard

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend that test holes are drilled into the fascias, soffits and bargeboards to see if it is a solid plastic or if it is over-cladding the timber as we suspect; if this is the case the over-cladding needs to be removed and new fascias, soffits and bargeboards added.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** £1500-£3000 dependent upon how much work is required; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Fascias and Soffits Section of this Report.

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### 5.0) Slippage on damp proof course

We noticed there had been some slippage on the brickwork on the damp proof course which normally indicates minor movement has occurred. With this type of modern timber frame structure there is very little internally to hold any movement in the walls in position. Whilst we have personally not seen any major problems in relation to this we are not aware of a history of any and should be monitored from time to time.

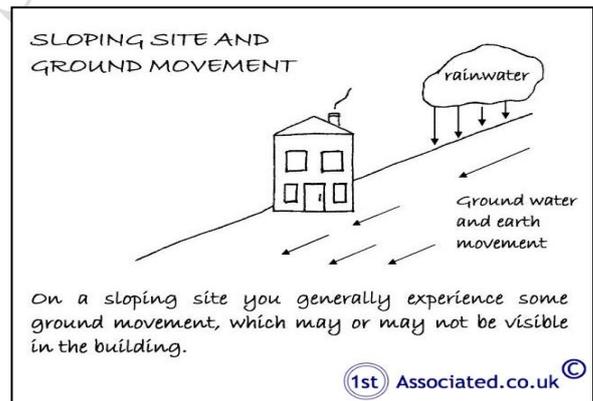


Slippage on damp proof course to the front of the property

Please see the Damp Proof Course Section of this Report.

### 6.0) Sloping site

This property sits on a sloping site, any property on a sloping site is more susceptible movement than one on a flat site; it is simply the laws of gravity. Foundations normally allow for such occurrences, particularly in new properties. There can still be some minor movement.



In addition to this the property sits on a sloping site and the rainwater wishes to travel from the top of the site to the bottom. We could see water marks and spalling to the base of the brickwork which we believe is caused by this movement of water around the property.

#### Spalling Defined

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

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** You can see from the photograph that deterioration is starting to occur to the brickwork. Whilst in theory it should not be a problem as it is below the damp proof course we would much prefer to see a channel around the property which would allow the rainwater to pass from the high areas to the low areas without damaging the brickwork.



Damage to bricks due to being on a sloping site

**ANTICIPATED COST:** £2000-£4000; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

### 7.0) Gutters and Downpipes

We would make a general comment with regard to your gutters and downpipes that in this age of property downpipes were discharging directly into the drainage system without a gully which although common for this age is not considered good practice as if they block you have to open up the drains.



Downpipe going directly into the ground without a gully



Downpipe from conservatory roof discharging onto ground



Rear left hand downpipe

We would also comment in relation to two specific problems the gutters and downpipes to the conservatory discharged directly onto the ground rather than into a soakaway and the downpipes to the rear left hand side (all directions as you face the property) of the property were no longer connecting into the drain and needs securing..

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We lifted the manholes and noted that the rainwater drain was blocked to the rear right hand corner (all directions given as you face the property).

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

Approximately half a day to a day's labour on the gutters and downpipes to clear and secure them.



Blocked manhole

Please see the Gutters and Downpipes Section of this Report.

**8.0) Fixtures and fittings – cheaper end of the market**

We discussed the fixtures and fittings in the property some are dated and some are from the cheaper end of the market and would comment that the doors look to be original, the bathrooms are relatively dated.

Please see the Internal Section of this Report.

**9.0) Services**

**Dated fuseboard**

We recommend a new fuseboard is installed.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Install new fuseboard.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** £250-£350 plus any additional work highlighted from an Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test.



Dated fuseboard

## **The Ugly**

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

As long as you are happy with the above being characteristics of this property there is nothing which we feels falls within this category.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

### **Maintenance**

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

### **Services**

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection only of the services within the property and we would always recommend you have your own specific testing for each of the services. 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 be carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

#### **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.

#### **Drainage**

Whilst we ran the tap for 15 minutes without any build up or blockages the only way to be 100% certain of the condition of the drains is to have a closed circuit TV camera report.

#### **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.

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**ACTION REQUIRED - SERVICES:** We would reiterate that we recommend with regard to all services that you have an independent check by a specialist contractor.

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

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

### **Purchase Price**

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

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

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

### **Estimates of 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:

You do need to decide whether you are happy buying a modern timber frame construction, as we mentioned, when we discussed this over the telephone we personally have made the decision not to buy modern timber frame constructions in the past when we had a choice of traditionally built or modern timber frame construction.

From a personal point of view this is purely because we do not have a history of building in this type of construction in our opinion. Whilst we are aware there have been reports following the World in Action independent television programme that is was an unfair view of the modern timber frame industry including we believe that the Building Research Establishment (BRE), which is generally considered the authority on building research in the UK, concurred with the unfair findings of the World in Action programme nevertheless it remains that timber framed building is not how we traditionally build houses in the UK.

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

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

We would ask that you read the Report 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/LLEGAL ADVISOR**

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

### **TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

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

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

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

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



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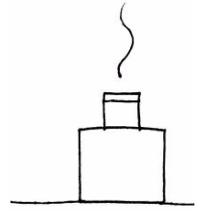
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## EXTERNAL

### CHIMNEY STACKS



#### Chimney Stacks

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

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

#### Chimney One – left hand side

This chimney is brick finished with a lead flashing and has a flue on it. From what we could see from ground level it looked in average condition considering its age, type and style. Unfortunately we were unable to see the flashing, we therefore cannot comment upon them.



Chimney One

#### Chimney Two – right hand side

This chimney was built in a similar manner to the first chimney, with one flue on it and an aerial. The tv aerial is fixed by a wire which can cut into the brickwork like cheese wire into cheese and should be removed.



Chimney Two

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Periodically inspect both chimneys.

#### Flashings Defined

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

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Flaunchings Defined

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

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.

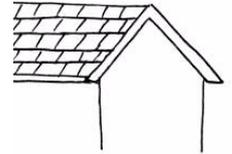
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## **ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS**

*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:*

We will consider the roofs in three areas, the main roof, the flat roofs and the conservatory roof.

### **Main Roof**

The main roof is pitched and clad with a concrete tile and, from ground level, this looks in average condition considering the roofs age type and style. With this age of roof it will occasionally suffer from a few missing or displaced tiles, this is nothing unusual and also sometimes weathering to the ridge tiles.



Main roof

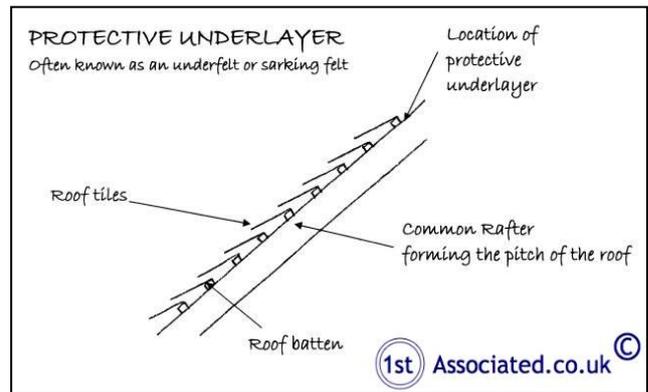
**ACTION REQUIRED:** We noted some minor deterioration to the edge of the tiles where the clips are which need to be looked at again during the summer of 2012 and carry out periodic inspections and maintenance of the roof, as required.



Clip to tile at edge of roof

## **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, it is damaged in a few places than we normally find.



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

## **Flat Roofs**

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

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

There is a flat roof to the front of the property and over the garage area. The roofs have a felt finish with mineral chipping felt to the flashing and the perimeter. There is moss sitting on the roofs indicating that the roofs are flat.

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



Flat roof to front



Close up flat roof



Flat roof to right hand side

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

Also it could not be established if there is insulation within the roof. Where we could see the underside of the roof in the garage area we could see that no insulation had been put in place or vapour barrier which is now a requirement and we suspect this will be the same in the other areas such as the utility room which will increase the risk of wet or dry rot.

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### **Polycarbonate Conservatory roof**

The property has a double lined polycarbonate plastic roof which are quite common in conservatories. This roof is in reasonable condition and we were pleased to see a lead flashing where the roof meets the main building which can be a problem area.



Conservatory roof

### **Polycarbonate Defined**

Transparent, extremely tough plastic sheet, used for security glazing. It may also be an insulating light panel, double walled or triple walled, or 10 or 16mm thick. It is not a fire hazard as it has low ignitability and low flame spread, and releases little heat and little smoke if burnt. It can be coated to resist damage from ultraviolet.



Lead flashing where conservatory meets main building

All the roofs were inspected from ground level with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. Flat roofs have been inspected from ground floor level and/or upper floor windows.

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

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

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## **ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT**

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

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

#### **Main Roof**

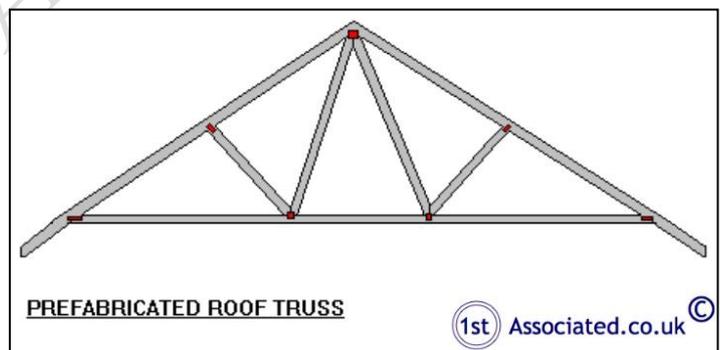
#### **Roof Access**

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located landing. There is no loft ladder or electric light and it partially has unsecured floorboards. We recommend that a ladder, good electric light and floorboards are secured throughout to make the loft space safer and easier to use.

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

#### **Roof Structure**

The property has a pre-fabricated trussed roof rafter. These are made in a factory and transported to site and then lifted into place. Without the manufacturers calculations and installation details we cannot comment categorically on the roof structure other than to say it is in line with what we typically see when looking at pre-fabricated trussed roofs including the wind bracing timbers.



Wind brace within roof – diagonal timber

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## Roof Timbers

We have inspected the roof structure for:

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



General view of inside of roof

Our examination was limited by the general configuration of the roof, the insulation and stored items. What we could see was generally found to be in average condition for its age, type and style. It is, however, feasible that there are problems in the roof that are hidden.

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

## Water Tanks

There is a plastic insulated water tank within the roof.

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



Water tank

## Ventilation

We could not see any ventilation within the roof ideally it should have ventilation to help reduce condensation.

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## **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 to comment.

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

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

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## GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

### Gutters and Downpipes

The property's gutters and downpipes are profile plastic (meaning shape).

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Downpipe rear left hand side

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would always recommend that the gutters and downpipes are cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes.



Downpipe directly into ground

### Soil and Vent Pipe

The property has plastic soil and vent pipes which we can just see above the tiles to the front of the property.

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.



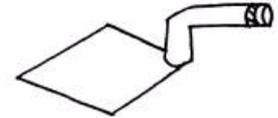
Soil and vent pipe

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# WALLS



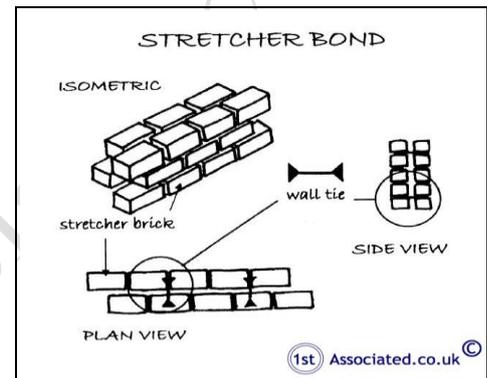
*External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.*

The walls are constructed of Stretcher bond brickwork to the face of the property and internally it is timber lined.

## Brickwork

This property is brick finished and laid in a cement mortar. This is all bedded in what is known as Stretcher Bond.

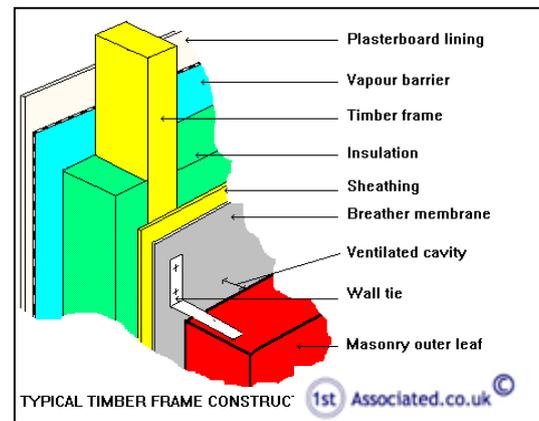
The term "Stretcher Bond" means that from the outside of the property, you can see a row of the sides of the bricks (known as "stretchers") followed by a course above of the same stretch of bricks set off so the joint is centrally above the "stretcher". This pattern would repeat throughout.



Brickwork

## Modern timber frame

However in a modern timber frame property the inside is not as the sketch above because there are no bricks or blocks internally as there is a timber lining.



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## Cavity walls

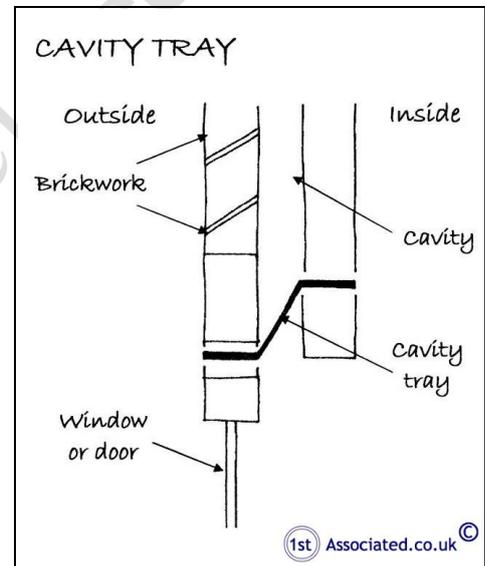
This property has a cavity although if it is insulated is unknown without opening up the structure. During this era insulation was starting to be used with what is commonly known as the fuel crisis and increasing fuel prices. It is not standard construction and we could see from the brickwork that there does not look to have been any insulation inserted at a later date however we would see specifically ask if any have been added.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm if insulation has been added to this property and advise us.

## Cavity tray

Where the conservatory meets the main building in theory there should be some sort of cavity tray to stop dampness getting into the brickwork travelling down behind it into the conservatory. However in practice this is nigh on impossible in this type of construction.

This sketch shows a cavity tray in a traditionally built house however as this is a modern timber frame house it cannot be carried out in the same manner.



## Cracking

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Cracking to brickwork around windows

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## **Efflorescence/Spalling**

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Damage to brickwork due to being on a sloping site

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

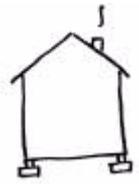
Our comments have been based upon how the brickwork / plaster has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the brickwork / plaster would be if it were opened up for this age, style and type of construction. We are however aware that all is not always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

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## **FOUNDATIONS**

*The foundations function is, if suitably designed and constructed, to transfer the weight of the property through the soil. As a general comment, many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or no foundations, as we think of them today, and typically a two-storey property would have one metre deep foundations.*

### **Foundations**

Given the age of the property we would expect to find stripped concrete foundations.

### **Building Insurance Policy**

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

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

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

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

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

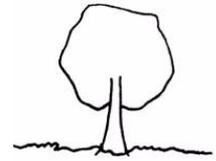
As no excavation has been carried out we cannot be 100 percent certain as to how the foundation has been constructed and we can only offer our best assumptions and an educated guess, which we have duly done.

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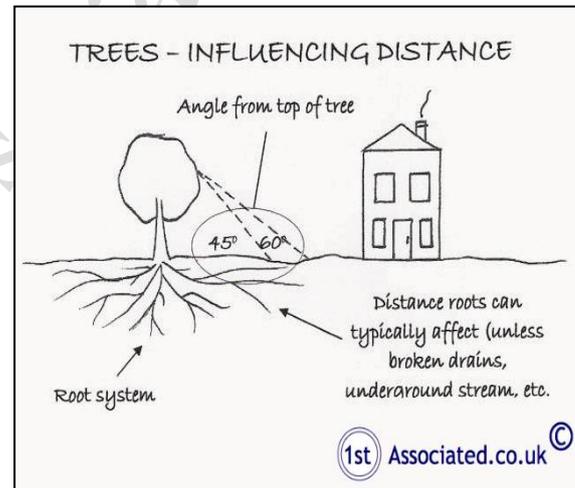
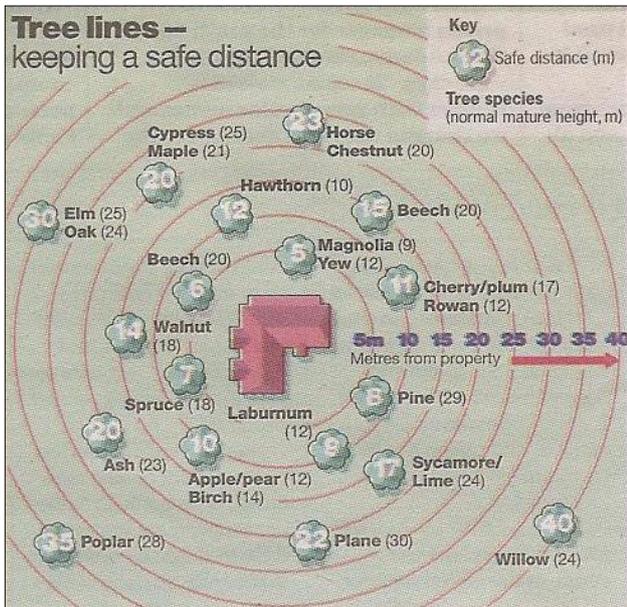
# TREES

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

There are trees within what we would term as influencing distance of the property.



Rear garden



## Influencing Distance Defined

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

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



## **DAMP PROOF COURSE**

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we could see a damp proof course, please see our comments with regard to slippage on the damp proof course in the Executive Summary.



Damp proof course slippage to front of property left hand side

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

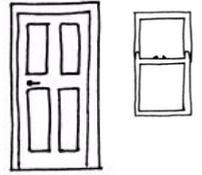
Finally, sometimes it is difficult for us to identify if there is a damp proof course in a property. We have made our best assumptions based upon our general knowledge of the age, type and style of this property.

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

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

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

### **Fascias and Soffits**

The fascias and soffits and bargeboards are a mixture of plastic and timber. The timber fascias and soffits are painted and we would comment they are in average condition for their age, type and style.

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

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



Overclad bargeboard



Painted timber fascias and soffits

## **Windows and Doors**

The property has plastic double glazed windows, which generally look to be from the cheaper end of the market; we make this comment due to the lack of trickle vents and the thickness of the profiles of the window frames.



Window with no trickle vent

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

Small vents to the windows to allow air movement inside the property to stop a build up of fumes or humidity.

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.

## **Imitation columns**

We are uncertain what to say about these other than it looks like the flat roof above them is cantilevered rather than being supported by them although they would have to be opened up to check this.



Imitation columns

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.*

You do have some external decorating still remaining to the columns and the underside of the flat roof.

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.

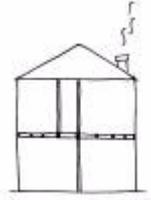
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## **INTERNAL**



# **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 likely to be plasterboard.

### 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.

## **Internal Walls and Perimeter Walls**

We found studwork walls to be fairly lightweight and as we explained this is due to the modern timber frame construction.

We have carried out a tap test to the internal walls (this is not rocket science, it is literally tapping the walls and listening for the sound made) and found them to be studwork walls and fairly lightweight, which is quite common in modern construction (or where there has been an alteration). You may find some noise transfer between rooms.

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

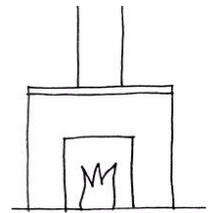
We cannot comment upon the condition of the structure hidden behind plaster, dry lining, other applied finishes, heavy furniture, fittings and kitchen units with fitted back panels.

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## **CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES**

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

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

During our question and answer session the owner advised that the chimneys are not working but are able to work and last worked when they moved into the property nineteen years ago. This looks to be a decorative feature only at present.



Fireplace in through lounge

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

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 and we do not comment as modern techniques for adding support can concealed very well 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

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## **FLOORS**



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

### **Ground Floor**

The floors felt solid under foot so we have assumed that they are constructed in concrete.

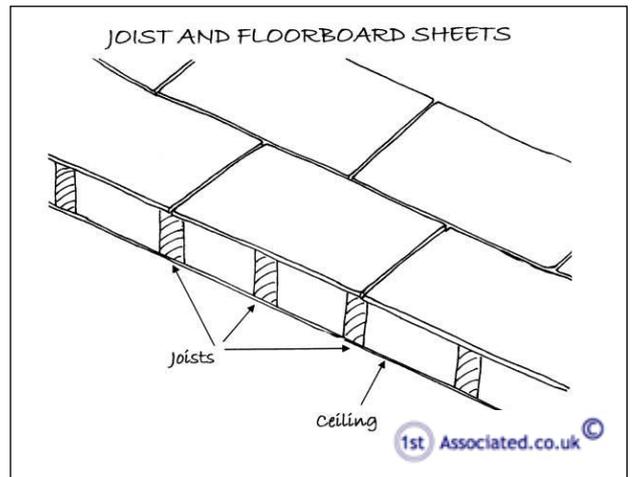
We have not opened up the floors or lifted the carpets or floor coverings.

### **First Floor**

We have assumed that the first floor construction is joist and floorboard sheets as this is typical in this age of property.

#### Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

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



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

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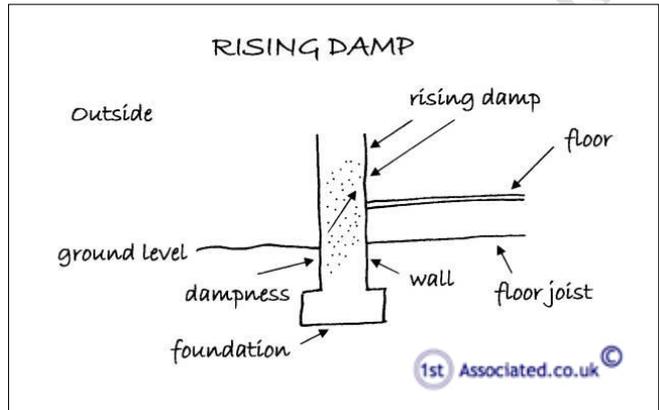
## DAMPNESS

*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.*

In this particular case as this property is modern timber framed we have been unable to take any damp meter readings.

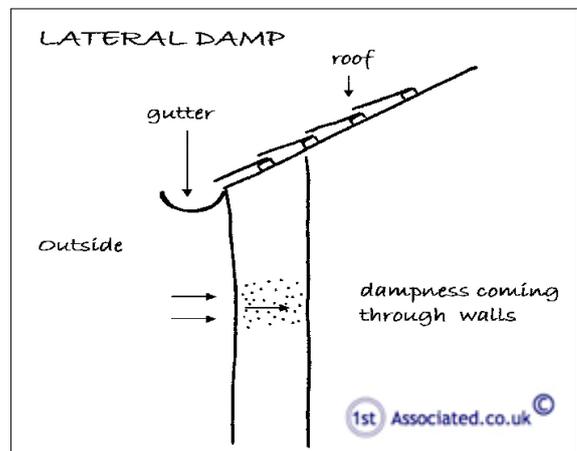


### Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

*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.*

In this particular case as this property is modern timber framed we have been unable to take any damp meter readings.

We have however inspected the brickwork externally and would comment that the pointing was in reasonable order.



## **Condensation**

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

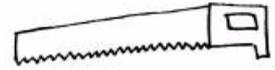
At the time of the inspection there were no obvious signs of condensation. However, it depends upon how you utilise the building. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating and ventilation of properties. Normally opening windows first thing in the morning resolves most condensation issues.

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

We did not find any extract fans in the bathroom, kitchen or the utility room in these humidity generating areas we would prefer to see extract fans particularly in a modern timber frame construction.

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.

## **INTERNAL JOINERY**



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

### **Doors**

The doors in the property we believe are original and are not of the best quality although they have obviously stood the test of time.



Door

### **Staircase**

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

### **Kitchen**

We found the kitchen in average condition, subject of course to some minor wear and tear as one would expect.

We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

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

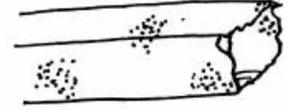
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## **TIMBER DEFECTS**



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

### **Dry Rot**

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

We have not visually seen any dry rot during the course of our inspection.

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

### **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.*

Again, we have not visually seen any wet 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.



## 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 and floor are the main areas that we look for woodworm. Within the roof we found no obvious visual signs of woodworm activity or indeed signs of past woodworm activity that has caused what we would term 'structurally significant' damage. In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active. Our inspection is usually restricted by insulation covering some of the timbers and general stored items in the roof, as it is restricted throughout the property by general fixtures and fittings.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you wish to be 100 per cent certain that there is no woodworm the only way would be to check the property when is emptied of fixtures and fittings etc.

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

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

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## INTERNAL DECORATIONS



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

Internal decorations are in average condition. You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste.

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

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## **THERMAL EFFICIENCY**



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

### **HIPs**

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

### **Roofs**

Some roof insulation was present although not to current Building Regulations requirements of 300mm. In this instance we found 200mm and insulation will need to be added.

### **Walls**

The property has a stretcher bond construction. In this age of property they were often built without insulation which has been added at a later date.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Adviser to check and confirm if there is insulation within the walls and advise us by return before the legal completion of the purchase to comment further, as often where insulation has been added at a later date it can cause damage to the wall ties.

### **Windows**

The windows are double glazed and therefore will have reasonable thermal properties.

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## Services

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

## Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average compared with what we typically see.

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

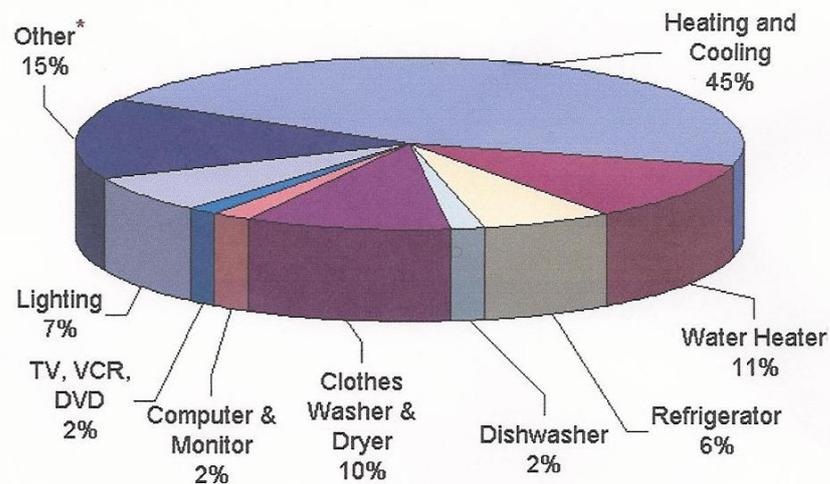
*[HTTP//www.est.org.uk](http://www.est.org.uk), which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*

*or alternatively [www.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](http://www.withouthotair.com/Videos.html) to download for free or buy a paper copy as we did.*

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

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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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.

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## **OTHER MATTERS**

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

### **Security**

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Further information should be obtained from the vendor and the installer at a later date.

### **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 have seen recently a smoke detector that fits within a light fitting (although we have not used these personally), which is charged when the light is switched on, providing it is switched on a certain number of times a year. We feel this is an excellent idea as it alleviates the problems of batteries running out. We would also advise that if you wish to have any general advice the local Fire Authority are usually happy to help.

### **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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## **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

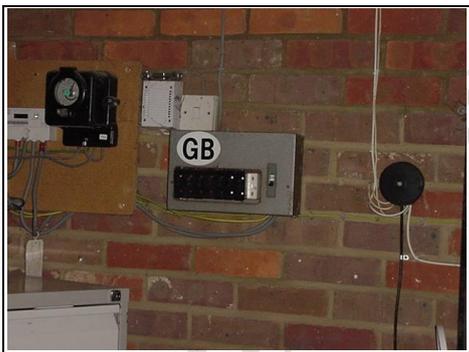


*It is strange to think that electricity only started to be used in domestic properties at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with gas lighting still being the norm for a good many years after.*

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 garage. The fuse board looked dated.



Fuse Board



Electric board unit across road not sure if still active?

## 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, or equivalent, approved electrical contractor or similarly approved.

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.

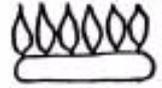
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**GAS**

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

We are advised that the property has mains gas. The consumer unit is located in the garage.

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



Gas meter and gas vent to right hand side of chimney

**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.



## **PLUMBING AND HEATING**

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

### **Water Supply**

We were advised by the owner that the controlling stopcock is located in the garage.

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

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

### **Water Pressure**

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

### **Cold Water Cistern**

Please see our comments in the Roof Section.

### **Hot Water Cylinder**

There is a hot water cylinder with insulation jacket located within the airing cupboard on the first floor at the top of the stairs

### **Plumbing**

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

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## Heating

The floor mounted boiler was located off the kitchen and vented in the garage it is manufactured by Potterton and looked to a relatively old design and typically is said by the manufacturers themselves to have a life of 10-15 years so we believe it is coming to the end of its natural life.



Potterton boiler

Our limited inspection of the hot water and central heating system revealed no evidence to suggest any serious defects but we would nevertheless recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

## Ten Minute Heating Test

The heating was switched on at the time of our survey and the property was reasonably warm.



Single panelled radiator



Double panelled radiator

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.

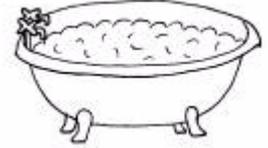
We cannot comment on the condition of the water service pipe to the building. It should be appreciated that leaks can occur for some time before signs are apparent on the surface.

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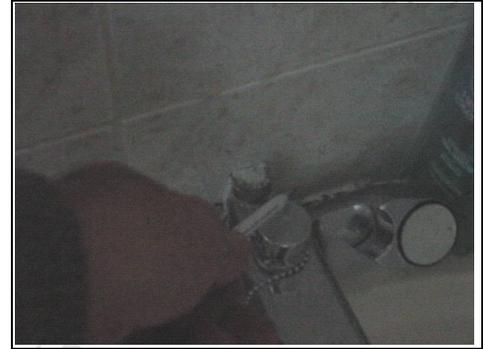
## **BATHROOM**



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

### **Bathroom**

The property has a dated three piece bathroom suite bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in average condition. There is some deterioration to the mastic around the bath with the mould, as can be seen in the photograph and is subject to some day-to-day wear and tear, as one would expect.



Mould in bathroom

### **En-Suite Bathroom**

The en suite bathroom is dated.

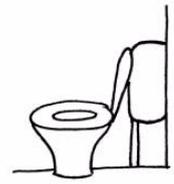
Finally, although we may have already mentioned it above we would reiterate that it is important to ensure that seals are properly made and maintained at the junctions between wall surfaces and baths and showers etc. We normally recommend that it is one of the first jobs that you carry out as part of 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 chambers / manholes.

#### **Inspection Chamber / Manhole One (rear right hand side)**

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

From what we could see it is shallow and believe it relates to the rainwater drains not the foul water drains.



Manhole One

### **Inspection Chamber / Manhole Two (front right hand side driveway)**

We were unable to lift this manhole without special lifting devices. We assume this relates to the foul water drains.



Manhole two

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. Normally in a property of this age the rainwater drains discharge into a soak away. We have commented within the Executive Summary that there are some problems with the rainwater goods please refer to this.

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

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

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## OUTSIDE AREAS

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

### GARAGES/PARKING

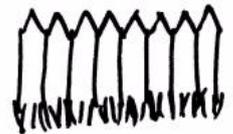


The property has the benefit of a large garage and off road parking to the front tarmac driveway. The garage has a large flat roof over it which is not insulated and there are some damp stains to the timber which are relatively minor.



Garage and parking at front

### EXTERNAL AREAS



#### Front Garden

The front garden is a good size with a lawn area and tarmac for parking.

#### Rear Garden

There is a largish rear garden laid predominately to lawn. As the garden is on a sloping it has been cut back and a retaining wall has been put in place. Unfortunately this retaining wall does not have any weep holes which means that water can build up behind it.



Rear Garden

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Retaining wall needs weep holes



Retaining wall cracking

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Add weep holes.

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

**Boundaries:** The left hand boundary (all directions given as you face the property) is usually the responsibility of the subject property.

Finally, whilst we note the boundaries, these may not be the legal boundaries. Your Legal Advisor should make further enquiries on this point and advise you of your potential liability with regard to any shared structures, boundary walls and fences.

## Neighbours

### Right Hand Neighbours

At the time of our survey we did not speak to the right hand side neighbours.

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

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

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

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

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES**

Your Legal Advisor should carry out Local Authority searches to ascertain whether the property is a Listed Building and whether it is situated in a Conservation Area. They should also find out any information available with regard to Planning Applications and Building Control. We have not made any formal or informal Local Authority enquiries.

Finally, your Legal Advisor should carry out any additional enquiries they feel necessary and if they find anything unusual or onerous then we ask that they contact us immediately for our further comments.

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It is our policy not to offer a conclusion to ensure that the Building Survey is read in full and the comments are taken in context.

If you would like any further advice on any of the issues discussed (or indeed any that have not been discussed!) then please do not hesitate to contact us on

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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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# APPENDICES

1. Modern timber framed properties
2. Electrical regulations
3. Information on the property market

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## Modern Timber framed buildings 1970s.

### What are timber framed buildings?

Timber framed buildings are buildings where the main structure is a timber frame; the idea is not new and in many ways it takes much from a traditional Tudor frame property, as far as the timber frame itself is concerned.



Tudor timber framed property exposed timber frame and covered timber frame with a white render



Close up of timber frame



Original crux frame building – literally two trees lent against each other, the timber frame is hidden by the render

In more recent times we have started to use what we term as engineered timber which better describes the timber that is being used within a modern timber framed building.

#### Engineered timber defined.

Timber that is sized by design rather than trial and error as it was in the traditional timber frame days of Tudor, Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

In Great Britain we moved away from traditional timber framed construction as timber got scarce and as we had the transport revolution with sea, canal and railways bringing in goods from further afield.

### Timber frame used all over the world

Whilst we have not surveyed timber frames in other countries from a technical Chartered Surveyor's point of view we are aware that timber framed construction is commonly used in other countries such as parts of America and Europe. Many of these countries are far more experienced now than we are with modern timber framed construction as we moved away from this form of construction due to the difficulty of material supplies (lack of good quality timber as most of it was being used for ship building) and the British climate and the damage that can be caused by dampness and

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rain such as wet rot, dry rot and woodworm which can cause major problems in a traditional timber frame property.

### Post war modern timber frame construction

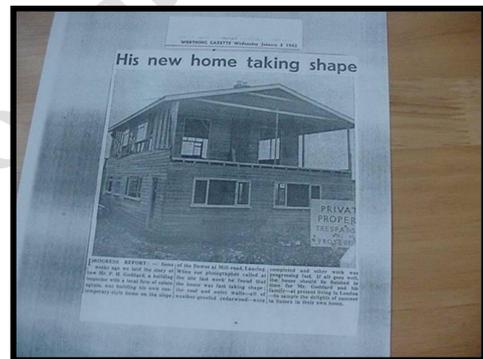
The earliest modern timber frame properties that we personally have surveyed have been after the war years. Here is a good example of a 1960s cedar wood clad property; it was possible to date it to around 1960 as at the time timber frame was such a new thing in the UK that it made the newspapers.



We believe this is one of the earliest of the modern timber frame constructions.

Behind the cedar wood cladding is a modern timber

This construction used a product called Novobord who were based in Thetford in Norfolk who unfortunately now seem to have gone out of business. We have a copy of the brochure for construction via PDF if anyone is interested.



This picture shows the novel design was timber frame construction



Newspaper clipping re modern timber frame house

Unfortunately when surveying a modern timber frame property there is little that you can see of the modern timber frame itself so you have to make various assumptions based upon your knowledge and experience together with carrying out research but we did note a few unique features such as a very shallow pitched main roof.

In our research on this particular modern timber frame house it fell into what many mortgage lenders classify as Non Traditional house building and unfortunately it was not possible to obtain a mortgage on. We were advised that four different people tried to obtain a mortgage on this modern timber frame property.

We used the excellent book in our research called:

Non Traditional Houses identifying non traditional houses in the UK 1918-1975 compiled and edited by Harry Harrison, Stephen Mullin, Barry Reeves and Alan Stevens.

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This book neatly divides the non traditional houses into four categories:-

Metal framed houses

Pre-cast concrete houses

In situ concrete houses

Timber framed houses

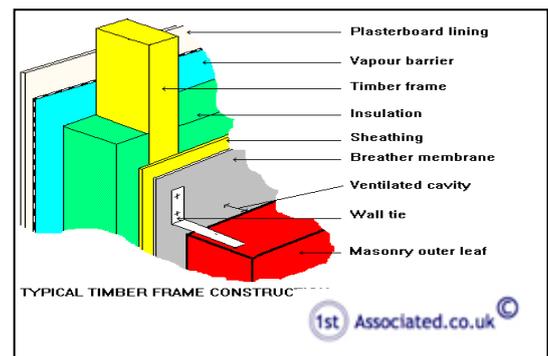
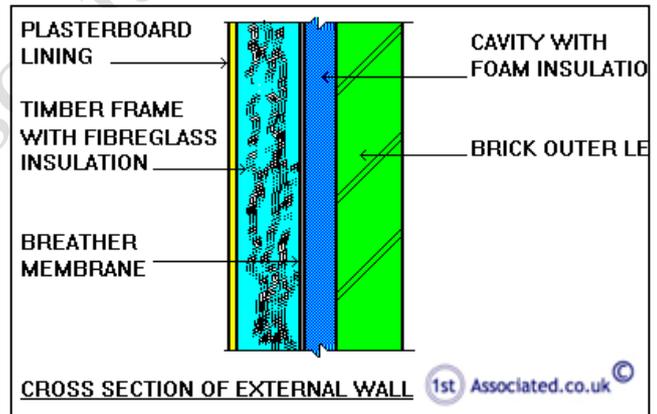
In this excellent book they identify one hundred and forty three different types of timber frame houses which we would say fall in the post war modern timber frame house category also known as houses for heroes as this was part of the massive house building that went on to house the soldiers coming home from the war.

### **Modern Timber framed buildings 1970s.**

With the boom in the housing market in the early 1970s there came with it thoughts of how to build faster and we would say more economically, things now being very much built to a price than a quality standards.

From this came the birth of the second wave of the modern timber frame building in the 1970s. The builders of this time, we would say, really did not understand properly what they were building and equally the surveyors at the time did not understand fully what they were looking! at although they were aware that they did not know what long term effects they had they could not be certain.

Then came the World in Action independent television programme.



### **World in Action television programme that changed everything**

The problems with the British Construction Industry and modern timber framed buildings were highlighted by a World in Action independent television programme

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stressing the poor construction practices. The World in Action programme on timber frame structures effectively brought the public's attention to the timber frame market down and resulted in a backlash against it with many timber frame companies ceasing to trade and is discussed on most surveying courses.

We spoke to an engineer about this and he advised that it was also talked about on this course and he remembers watching the programme which was emphasising the dry construction whilst showing photographs of carpenters building the modern timber frame buildings in the pouring rain and the timbers being wrongly stored.

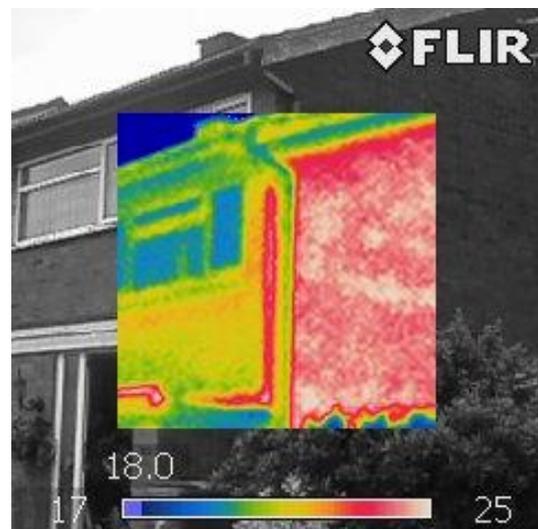
### **Was the World in Action television programme unfair on the modern timber frame construction industry?**

Whilst we are aware there have been reports following the World in Action independent television programme that it was an unfair view of the modern timber frame industry although we have not seen it we are aware that the Building Research Establishment (BRE), which is generally considered the authority on building research in the UK, have also conducted their own research which did not have the same conclusions as the World in Action programme.



### **Modern timber framed building problems that we have come across in 1970s buildings**

We can give two examples of this age of modern timber frame construction where the brickwork has not been tied into the timber frame correctly, in both cases we were asked to investigate noise problems. We found when thermal imaging the property that heat was coming out of various areas of the building, this in turn, when examined more closely, was due to the brick outer leaf and the timber inner leaf not being bolted together properly and air was passing through the property causing a wind chill factor.



The red thermal imaging picture shows where heat was coming out of the timber frame where it had become loose from the actual structure.

## **How does modern timber frame construction work?**

Whilst a modern timber frame construction property looks like a traditional building it can have a cladding in render, brick or stone rather than having brick or blockwork internally it has a timber structure/lining. This lining takes the weight of the roof and in many cases you can see the property completely built without cladding in brickwork/render/stonework on the outside.

## **The 1990s wave of modern timber frame construction**

Along came the 1990s and the associated boom and along came timber frame construction although many would argue is now a completely different animal as we understand how to build a lot better as the construction industry has moved on miles since the early days of modern timber frame construction.



Modern timber frame construction almost indistinguishable from a normal house

## **1990s modern timber frame construction insulation everywhere**

One of the main ways that modern timber frame construction has changed over the years is the adding of insulation. Insulation is now utilised far more as well as thought being given to interstitial condensation and they have also thought of a damp proof membrane because of this although there are various comments and thoughts we are aware of the malpractice of cutting opening in this which are causing problems.

### Interstitial Condensation Defined

This is where moisture is present within the structure of a building. The more moisture it contains, the bigger the vapour pressure and smaller amount moisture, the less vapour pressure.

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A signs that a new build property is likely to be a timber frame property is masses of rigid insulation such as what you can see in the photographs below.



### Silver foil/shiny houses

If you do pass a modern housing site hopefully during the summer months you may get the opportunity to see a house that looks like it has been wrapped in wrapping paper – this is a modern timber framed house.



General view of 1990s timber frame construction



Bay window and base of property



Personally we would not purchase a modern timber frame construction property although we cannot give any specific reasons we just have the feeling that it has not truly been tested in use in the UK. We should also add that it should not be forgotten how the British construction industry works with the lowest price the contractor that builds the work and there is also a pressure to complete to set times to meet profit margins.

Last but not least the British weather needs to be considered as not only can it rain when properties are being built but it can also be humid when it is complete.

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## **THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS**

Here is our quick guide to the Regulations, but please take further advice from a qualified and experienced electrician.

From 1st January 2005, people carrying out electrical work in homes and gardens in England and Wales must follow new rules in the building regulations. All significant electrical work carried out in the home will have to be undertaken by a registered installer or be approved and certified by the local authority's building control department. Failure to do so will be a legal offence and could result in a fine. Non-certified work could also put your household insurance policy at risk.

If you can't provide evidence that any electrical installation work complies with the new regulations, you could have problems when it comes to selling the property.

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.
2. A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the building regulations.

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

### **Work You Cannot do Yourself**

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

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## **INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **LIMITATIONS**

Our limitations are as the agreed Terms and Conditions of Engagement.

## **CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT**

The report has been prepared in accordance with our Conditions of Engagement dated XXXX 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 dry and overcast at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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

## **NOT LOCAL**

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

## **OCCUPIED PROPERTY**

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

## **INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been limited due to us not opening up the floors and not having the benefit of opening up the walls together with this being a specialist modern timber frame construction without us knowing the design criteria.

## **BUILDING INSURANCE**

We do not advise with regard to building insurance. You need to make your own enquiries. Some areas may have a premium, some buildings may have a premium and some insurers may be unwilling to insure at all in certain areas. You need to make your own enquires prior to committing to purchase the

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property. Please be aware the fact a building is currently insured does not mean it can be re insured.

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

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

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

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

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