JOB REFERENCE: MH/MB

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

Hertfordshire

Marketing by:

www.1stAssociated.co.uk

0800 298 5424

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

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

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

We then go through a detailed examination of the property starting with the external areas working from the top of the property down, followed by the internal areas and the buildings services. We conclude with 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 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.

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.

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.

SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

This is a two storey end terraced property of which the apartment makes up the ground floor with an adjacent single garage. There are gardens to the front and the rear.

Most properties such as this are sold leasehold/shared freehold which means you are likely to have a shared responsibility for common areas/common components. Common areas/common components include areas of shared use such as the roof structure and external walls and the drainage for example.

The property's style is typical of those built in the 1970's which is known as a cross wall construction (you advised us that it was built in 1972/1973). As we mentioned this was an era of mass house building due to a general boom in housing. We believe the standards of building construction during any boom time generally go down due to supply and demand of good quality labour and materials.

Putting Life into Perspective!

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

1971	Decimalisation
Early 1970s	British Property Boom
1973	Britain enters the European Economic Community
1977	Elvis Presley Dies
1978-1979	The Winter of Discontent
1979-1991	The Thatcher Years

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Front view

Rear view

Rear garden

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

As you are living at the property we are sure you are familiar with the accommodation and facilities.

Ground Floor

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- Entrance hall
- Front lounge
- Kitchen
- Internal bathroom
- Rear bedroom
- Rear reception room/study area

Outside Areas

Gardens to the front and rear.

INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

A selection of photographs taken on the day of our survey.

Ground Floor

Lounge

Kitchen area

Main bedroom

Study

Internal bathroom

SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

Here we give a summary of the construction of the entire property, not just your property.

External

Structure:	Cross wall construction, this is where the two side walls are the structural walls
Main Roof:	Pitched roof clad with tiles Low level felt covered roofs
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic – thin gutters
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Internal (assumed)
Walls:	Stretcher bond brickwork at low level with a tiled cladding at high level (assumed)
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted – possibly timber, possibly asbestos
Windows and Doors:	Plastic double glazed, no trickle vents

Internal

Ceilings:		Concrete with a gypsum plaster (assumed)
Perimeter Walls:		Cavity, unknown whether they are insulated
Internal Walls:		Painted and papered, likely to be blockwork
Floors:	Ground Floor:	Suspended timber floor with joists going from side to side (from cross wall to cross wall)
	First Floor:	Likely to be reinforced concrete or pre-cast concrete hollow pots

Services

From our discussions we believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (assumed). The boiler is situated in the garage and is a Baxi Boiler. The electrics are located in a cupboard off the entrance hall.

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.

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 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 one hundred and fifty 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, 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.

Generally we found the property to be in average condition considering the property's age, type and style. However we would have advised you prior to moving in about coming to agreement with an insurance claim on the movement that we found within the property, which is explained within the Ugly Section of the Report. We have divided the Executive Summary into 'The Good', 'The Bad' and 'The Ugly', to help distinguish what in our mind are the main issues.

The Good

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

The general proportions of the property are larger that you would find in a modern house.

The property has off road parking and a garage.

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

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.

HIGH LEVEL WORK

The following relates to work that may need scaffolding which can be expensive. As discussed it may be worth your while buying a tower scaffold. An example of a tower scaffold we have used is on the adjacent photo.

Tower scaffold

1) Roofs

1.1 Main roof

The high level roof looks like there may be some tiles loose to the rear around the tree area although it is difficult to get a proper view. It would certainly be worth having a close up inspection of it from a tower scaffold and also clearing the gutters which are no doubt subject to a lot of leaves.

1.2 Cement verge to the gable end

This has deteriorated to the left hand side of the property adjacent to the garages and needs re-cementing to stop water getting into the cavity and causing deterioration. Alternatively a plastic verge may be worth considering.

Verge that needs repointing

ACTION REQUIRED: Repoint the verge, use a plastic cover.

ANTICIPATED COST: A few hundred pounds plus the cost of getting access to the area. With scaffold this is likely to be quite expensive. This is an example of where you may be able to do the work off a tower scaffold. We would double if not treble the cost for scaffolding. Obviously we would recommend you obtain quotations.

This would be our highest priority of all the work. We assume this will be a shared cost.

1.3 Garage flat roof

This is in reasonable condition, although the gutters would benefit from cleaning. The overcladding to the fascia boards of the garage is something that we would never recommend and ideally we would recommend that this is removed and replaced either with a solid plastic fascia board or a timber fascia board.

1.4 Front roof

The front roof is very flat and literally has plants growing from it. Budget for repair work to this roof within the next three years.

Moss on front flat roof

ACTION REQUIRED: As a minimum the roof should be cleared and then patch repaired. We would recommend that this work is carried out although it isn't overly important as it doesn't cover a habitable area.

ANTICIPATED COST: A few hundred pounds at the most; quotations required.

Please see the Roof Coverings Section of this Report.

2.1 **Fascias and soffits**

The fascias and soffit boards at high and low level are in need of redecoration. The high level fascia and soffit boards have flaking paint in need of attention. We would highlight that whilst the areas we could see looked to be timber there may well have been some asbestos used; you need to be aware of this.

Fascias and soffits in need of repair

ACTION REQUIRED: Check they are not asbestos, sand down the paintwork and redecorate.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £500- £1,000 plus access scaffold. Again we would refer you to our comments with regards to a tower scaffold. Quotations required.

Flaking fascias and soffits – fascia is possibly timber, we cannot be absolutely certain what the soffit is, it could be asbestos.

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

2.2 Overcladding

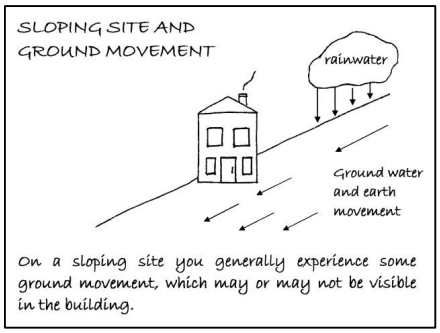
As mentioned overcladding has taken place to the fascia boards to the garage. Ideally this should be taken off completely and replaced in either timber or plastic. Please see earlier comments.

Overcladding to the garage

Please see the Fascias and Soffits Section of this Report.

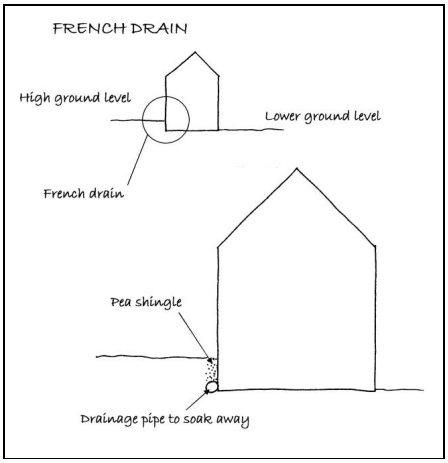
3.1 Sloping site

The property sits on a sloping site with a stream not too far away from the bottom of the garden. As discussed the rainwater and surface road water is trying to get from the top of the hill to the bottom and your house is in the way. We therefore recommend a French Drain is added around the property to transfer the water from one side to the other.



3.2 Running gulley

Where the driveway is, you may need a running gulley to stop water getting into the garage. However before you do anything we suggest you stand outside the next time it rains heavily and see how much water is gathering around the property/trying to go past the property.



ACTION REQUIRED: Dig a French gulley around the property. This is a labour intensive task, whilst it only involves digging a shovels width or so around the property it can take a while.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £250 - £750; quotations required. We would recommend this work is carried out prior to the winter of 2011. We would also recommend that you stand out in the next heavy rainfall and see how the rain is flowing.

Entrance to garage may be a possible location for running gulley

4.1 Dampness/condensation

The dampness that we could see within the property, we would advise is condensation. This we believe is being caused by a combination of the previous occupier's lifestyle, the wallpaper/plastic paints that have been used give a cagoule type effect (these walls need to breathe so you need to use water based paints on the walls).

Mould within the study

4.2 Internal Radiators

Ideally all/some of the radiators should be relocated underneath the windows as radiators underneath windows help air circulation as the heat rises it joins the colder air from the windows and circulates around the room.

Radiator within bedroom for example which should be moved from an internal wall to under the window

4.3 Trickle vents

The windows didn't have any trickle vents. Ideally these should be added. We believe that they can be retro-fitted although we have never actually seen it. From the thermal imaging that we carried out (although the environment wasn't ideal) did show them to be quite successfully retaining heat.

No trickle vents to windows

4.4 Cold Floor

You have a suspended timber floor, air flows underneath it via airbricks, the cold floor may have added to the condensation problem. We would recommend insulating the floors as and when the work is being carried out.

ACTION REQUIRED: The changes in how the building is used by your lifestyle alone may be enough to remove the condensation. Our priorities would be to improve the extract fan in the internal bathroom and as you commented that you like to cook you may well also need an extract in the kitchen. We would then look to move the radiator in the bedroom underneath the window, this may be sufficient. However you could get a more energy efficient building by insulating underneath the floors, as discussed there are practical problems with doing this.

ANTICIPATED COST: To improve the extract fans we would recommend larger extract fans with humidity thermostats, we would expect the costs to be in the region of £100 - £200 fitted; quotations required.

Please see the Dampness Section and Appendices of this Report.

3) Wall finishes

There are areas of mould on the wall, generally these can be washed down with warm soapy water however in some cases this also requires repainting. In other areas plaster is damaged and will need a skim-coat. At the same time as this is being carried out we would recommend a skim-coat is added to the ceiling which as mentioned looks to be an asbestos based artex. They are relatively common in this age of property, please see our article in asbestos on the 1stAssociated.co.uk website.

4) Bathroom floor

You have had a tiled floor put on top of the suspended timber floor. In our experience these two never work well together even where there is an expansion joint which we couldn't see. A suspended timber floor moves differently to a harder tiled floor, we normally find that tiles end up cracking at the joints and allowing water to leak thorough which inevitably gets spilled in a bathroom.

In this case as you know, we opened up the floor by cutting a hole in it, we could see that the floorboard was damp through. This does not seem to have affected the joists beneath from our view from this access point.

ACTION REQUIRED: We believe that the floor is probably saveable but you will only know this when you take up all the tiles. It then may dry on its own however you do have to consider that you may have to put new flooring down using a WBP quality floor covering. We would then also recommend vinyl flooring in this situation with all the seals being sealed and forming a skirting of approximately 150mm to make sure any spills of water don't get behind it.

ANTICIPATED COST: A best case scenario you would be looking just at a new vinyl floor, a worst case scenario would be replacing the floor. We would expect costs in the region of £200 - £500; quotations required. You mentioned that you were going to change the bath, this would be an ideal time to do this.

Please see the Flooring Section of this Report.

SERVICES

5) Electrics

Much of the electrics look to be original, albeit that some of the power points have been changed to double sockets and the fuse board looks to be relatively new. We would still nevertheless recommend that the single socket points are upgraded to double socket points.

Electrics

ACTION REQUIRED: Ideally we would upgrade the fuse board to the latest available and also upgrade single to double socket points.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £500; quotations required.

Please see the Electrics Section of this Report.

6) Extract fan to the bathroom and kitchen

As already recommended we would increase the size of the extract fans in these areas that are fitted to a humidity thermostat control that switches on automatically when the level of humidity reaches a certain level. Internal bathrooms are often prone to dampness.

Extract fan in internal bathroom should be bigger

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our earlier comments.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

7) Characteristics of a 1970's property

The 1970's era was one of boom years in property and also rising fuel prices which lead to changes in construction, many of which are not visible initially when you look at a property. This together with modern requirements to heat properties all year round at higher heat levels never previously considered has resulted in many of these properties being prone to condensation. There are a range of problems that generally are:

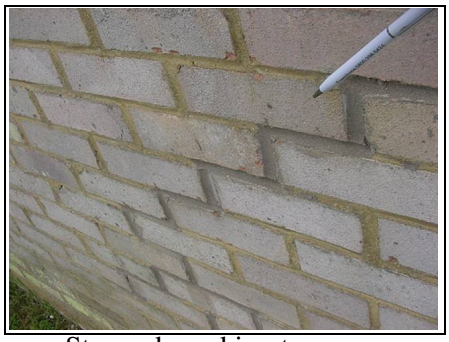
i) Where new systems are added to old, for example the changing of the air heating system to a water central heating system.
ii) Inappropriate fashion changes – the tiled flooring in the bathroom
iii) Cold Bridging – this is where elements within the structure transfer heat quicker than others. A typical example will be the cavity wall brickwork with a concrete lintel. The concrete lintel conducts the heat much quicker than the brickwork and therefore can lead to condensation.

The Ugly

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

8) Movement

We can see that there has been movement to the property. If we had been advising you before you purchased the property we would have recommended you to gain a reduction in price due to movement in the structure as a property with any movement always concerns purchasers. We would have also recommended that the existing



Stepped cracking to your neighbours garage

owners to contact their insurance company and made a claim. As you may or not be aware when buying a property caveat emptor is the law which means 'buyer beware'. We are unsure how an insurance company would now treat a claim, nevertheless we would recommend that you make a claim as the insurance company then will usually carry out a year long monitoring process as recommended by the Building Research Establishment.

Unusual brickwork to the left hand side

Obviously as we have had a one-off inspection where we were at the property for only a few hours, it is not possible to confirm whether the movement is progressive or not within this time.

We noted cracking as I am sure you have between the main building and the garage and also to the garage gable end of the adjoining neighbours property. Also we are slightly suspicious with regard to the unusual brickwork to the base of the property on the left hand side.

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

9) Tree nearby

As discussed there is a tree far too close to the property for the likings of insurance companies. We cannot see any direct consequences in the form of movement within the brickwork of the tree being in this location and as discussed it is probably holding the bank of the sloping site together, nevertheless it does need regular maintenance.

Tree nearby

ACTION REQUIRED: Maintain tree, ideally appoint an arboriculturalist rather than a tree surgeon to carry out the work and give long term advice.

10) Shared ownership/leasehold properties – who pays for what?

Whilst legally there may be criteria of who pays for what, we often find that in a situation such as yours it is very much down to discussions with your neighbour to resolve any problems and of course both of yours financial situation. We would recommend a 'cup of tea' meeting with your neighbour and showing them this report.

11) Does the Property have an Active and Interested Management Company?

Many of the problems caused with these multi-occupied conversion properties is that there is no one person of the shared owners who takes responsibility for shared issues. The usual way to do this is to set up a Management Company and they would look at things such as fire alarm systems, general maintenance etc. A good management company can often make or break a property.

Please see our further comments below.

Other Items

Moving on to more general information.

Future Work/ Sinking Fund

It may well be worth having a fund built up between you for any future major work. This would only need a shared account, with a small amount of money being put in each month. It would then reduce the impact of any major costs.

Estimates of Costs

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs there are many variables, our aim is to give you an indication of costs. 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. 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 probably be best to supervise the work if it is complex, both of which we can do if so required.

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:

We would recommend that a claim is made with regards to the movement in the property as a safety measure and we recommend that you then methodically work through the items we have mentioned.

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

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 – LEASHOLD

We have not seen a copy of the lease and have assumed for the purposes of this report that it is a full repairing and insuring lease and that there are no onerous or unusual clauses, if there are your Legal Advisor/Solicitor should have brought these to your attention

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS

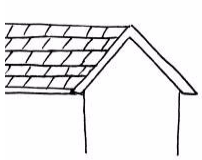
This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement for Residential Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen and signed a copy of our terms of engagement please phone immediately.

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 - just phone us.

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

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.

The underlayer's function is to minimise wind and water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:

We will consider the roofs in three different areas, the main roof, the front and the garage roof.

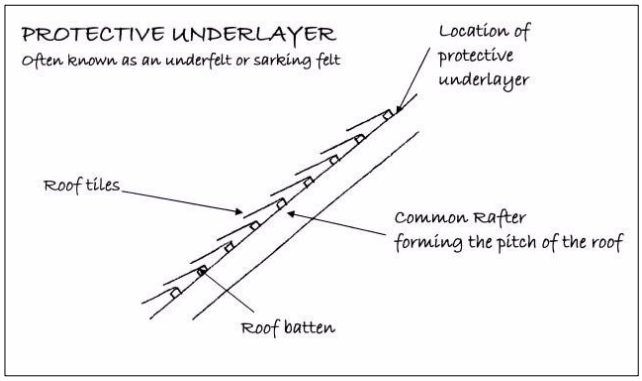
Main Roof

The roof is pitched and clad in a concrete tile. From what we could see the concrete tiles are lying level and true and look in reasonable condition with the exception of near the rear right hand corner (all directions given as you face the property) where we think there may be some displaced tiles. There are also likely to be a lot of leaves lying on the roof.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regards to the verge needing repointing.

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.



Unfortunately it was not possible to access the loft space. In this age of property a protective underlayer is likely often known as a sarking felt which is likely to be a hessian based bitumen.

Low Level Roofs

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.

Front flat roof

The flat roof has a flat felt finish, the problem is that the roof is too flat. The roof is finished with loose stone chippings which are to resist frost attack and reduce the de-grading affect caused by the sun. Care should be taken when walking on the roof. This type of roof covering has not been generally used for many years.

Extensive moss on front flat roof

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments within the Executive Summary. To some extent the damage that can be caused is limited to your property as it doesn't sit over a habitable room however it may cause dampness into next doors property.

Garage roof

The roof has a felt roof, whilst the felt is in reasonable condition and looks to have been renewed within the past five or so years, it is poorly detailed being predominately flat.

ACTION REQUIRED: Inspect annually.

Garage roof

Underside of garage roof

Please see the comments in the Executive Summary.

Flat roofs typically have a life between 20and 30 years, depending upon the quality of workmanship, materials and decking, although some roof manufacturers do claim longer. In this instance the garage roof is at the start of this 20 year period and the front roof is to the middle and end of this period, the basic problem being the front roof is flat.

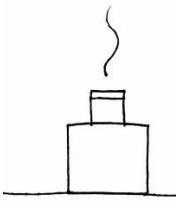
We would make a final comment that if you do use the garage as a work shed or something like that it may well be worth you insulating the roof.

Finally, 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 level and the roofs themselves.

Unfortunately we were only able to see approximately fifty percent of the main roof due to its shallow pitch and the tree blocking our view 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.

FLUES



Flues

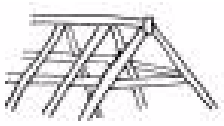
Flues offer ventilation to things like boilers and soil and vent pipes and usually come through the roof covering, which can often also be a weak area.

We noted flues to the roof, however they were very difficult to view properly, we believe they relate yours and your neighbours internal bathroom.

Finally, we have made our best assumptions on the overall condition of the flues from the parts we could see. 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 the Chimney breasts, Flues and Fireplaces Section of this Report.

ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT

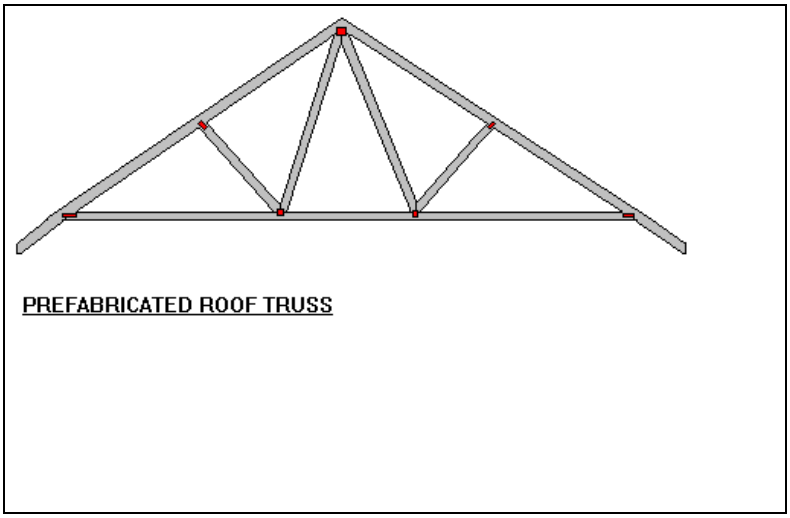


(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)

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 Structure



PREFABRICATED ROOF TRUSS

Whilst we could not gain access to the roof structure (if you recall we had a brief chat with your neighbour), given the age, type and style of property, we believe the roof structure is likely to have a pre-fabricated timber roof. In this age of property typical problems that we have come across is condensation within the roof space due to a lack of ventilation.

ACTION REQUIRED: Ideally add ventilation to the roof.

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 deterioration. Regular inspection and adequate maintenance are therefore essential if serious problems are to be avoided.

Gutters and Downpipes

From ground level the gutters and downpipes looked to be plastic. Generally they appear in average condition although they needed a clean. We did note when we put our ladder against them that they were thinner than we normally see, there is not much that can be done about this than replacing them.

Gutters full of stones, etc

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. The front gulley would also benefit from cleaning.

Front gulley

Next doors downpipe

We did note that next doors downpipe was not fitted correctly. This is well worth a 'cup of tea' chat with your next door neighbour advising them that you would be happy to arrange for it to be fixed or they can come round and fix it. Ultimately it is likely to cause damp into their building. We would also comment that as you are aware, it seems that your own downpipes are not that great
And you just need to make sure that they don't end up looking like this one.

Downpipe that doesn't fit correctly that is in your garden. Be neighbourly and fix it.

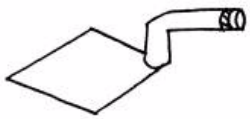
Soil and Vent Pipe

From the position of the toilet i.e. internal (no windows) we believe the soil and vent pipes to be internal within services ducts and cannot be inspected. Please see our comments on the Flues. We would comment that the service ducts around the soil and vent pipes may well contain asbestos given the age of the property.

Service ducts defined
These are passages running vertical and horizontally through the building for water supply and waste water pipes and sometime electics (although not usually in the same service duct!)

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

WALLS



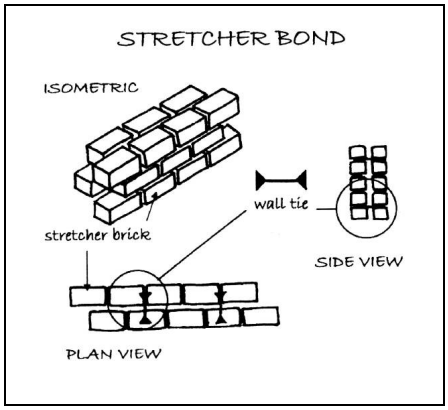
External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.

Brickwork / Vertical tiling

The walls are built predominantly in brickwork with vertical tiles to the front. This property has what is known as cross wall construction, this is where the main structure is built on the walls that run from the front to the back to the sides of the property.

Brickwork

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

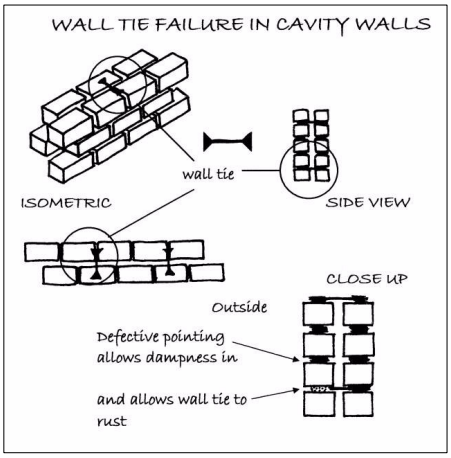


At around the time when this building was constructed construction was changing; insulation was starting to be used however from the age of the property we would recommend more insulation is added.

ACTION REQUIRED: Add insulation to cavities. As discussed there are various grants available and you mention that you may be able to get even bigger grants!

Wall tie failure

Wall tie failure occurs on pre 1970s properties, the wall ties used can rust. In this instance we didn't see anything that identified to us that there is wall tie failure, this would be horizontal cracking. However this is a progressive problem so you do need to inspect the property annually. It is possible to replace defective ties.



Cracking

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

Cracked brickwork

Cracking to brickwork in garage

Vertical tiling

Whilst the majority of the vertical tiling is on your neighbours property, as you saw from our thermal imaging there was a lot of heat coming out of it. You may have a shared responsibility for it. Vertical tiles may be fixed directly to a wall or battens, or indeed counter battens. It is necessary to nail all tiles and it is also good practice to use an underfelt and lap the tiles to approximately two inches (30 mm). Without opening up the structure we cannot confirm this.

Vertical tiling

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 / vertical tiling / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age concrete lintels or metal lintels are common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

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

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 that the properties age and type, we would expect to find a strip concrete foundation as these are generally used in this type of construction as they are both quick and economical.

On reflection there may also be a raft foundation here given the location or there may have been a ring beam added.

> **ACTION REQUIRED**: We were about to say your solicitor should ask the owners whether any underpinning has been carried out at this property, however as you already own it this isn't possible!

Building Insurance Policy

Normally this would be a joint insurance policy covering the whole of the property. We are unaware of the arrangements in this instance. It may well be that the insurance policy is continued.

> **ACTION REQUIRED**: Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regards to making an insurance claim.

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.

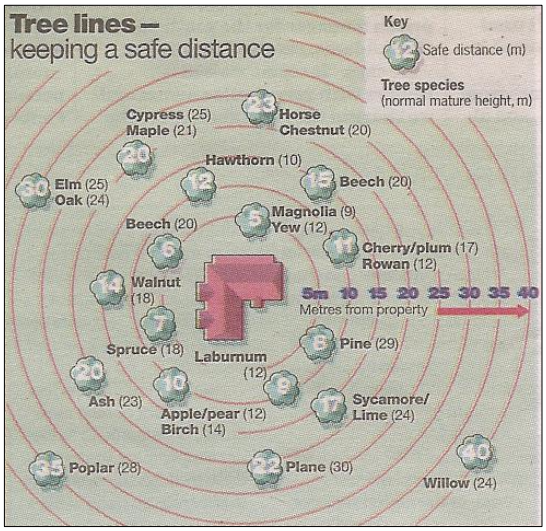
TREES

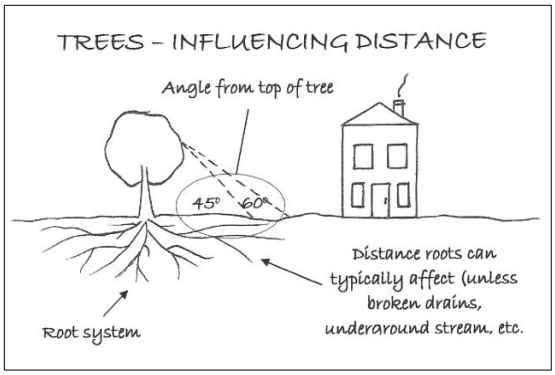
Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.

You have a tree very close to the rear of the property. As mentioned the tree forms many functions including holding the bank together, it does however need to be maintained, it looks to have had a lack of maintenance. If it is left to overgrow it can equally attack drains as well as damage the property. Properties with trees nearby will always be susceptible to movement.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend maintenance as soon as possible and advice from an arboriculturist (not a tree surgeon).

Please see our comments within the executive summary.





Influencing Distance Defined

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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

DAMP PROOF COURSE

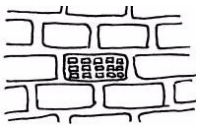
The Building Act of 1878 required a damp proof course to be added to all newly built properties within the London area. It also required various other basic standards. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout London and then the country as a whole,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

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we could see a damp proof course to the property in some areas it is slightly too low.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments with regards to the sloping site and the adding of a French drain in the Executive Summary.

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

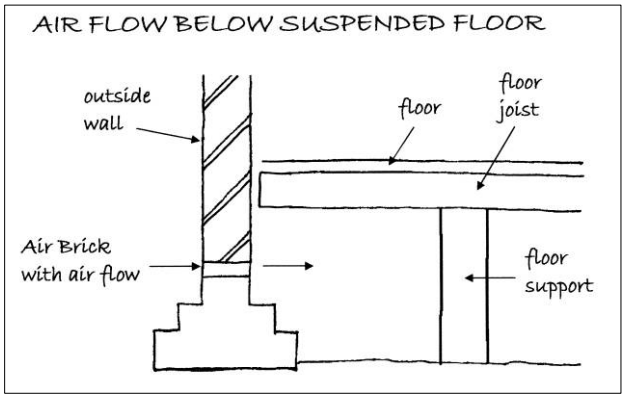
AIRBRICKS



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

Airbricks are visible to this property, which is usually seen when suspended timber floors have been used which as you are aware there is in this case. We noted the airbricks have had wire put over them which is often used to stop mice from getting in. We generally find that the attraction of mice relates to a persons lifestyle. If there is no food source then the mice tend to move on.
You need to ensure that the air bricks are kept clear and that there is a through flow of air from the front to the rear.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments in the executive summary with regards to the bathroom floor. There may also be some problems with the kitchen floor.

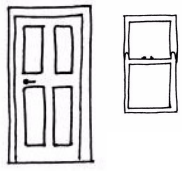


Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined

A suspended timber floor usually consists of timbers spanning the ground floor, supported on piers (usually brickwork), vented via air bricks within the walls.

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

FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



This section covers fascias, soffits and bargeboards, 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 property has painted fascias and soffits. The paint work ranges from average to poor. In this age of property there may be some asbestos although they equally could be timber.

Flaking fascias and soffits – fascia possibly timber, not certain about soffits

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our general advice on asbestos on our web site 1stAssociated.co.uk. Redecorate the sooner the better. If upon close inspection you decided to replace the fascias and soffits, we would recommend vents are added to the soffit that will allow ventilation to the loft space to help reduce condensation. Please also please see our comments with regard to overcladding to the garage fascia board.

Windows and Doors

You have plastic windows which we would term as being from the cheaper end of the market as there are no trickle vents. Ideally these should be added. As you are aware when we thermal imaged the windows they are holding the heat in relatively well (a lot better than the vertical tiling).

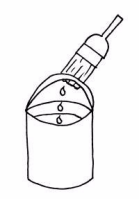
Windows have no trickle vents

Trickle vents defined

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

Finally, we have carried out a general and random inspection of the fascias and soffits and windows and doors. 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 fascias and soffits and windows and doors. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

EXTERNAL DECORATIONS



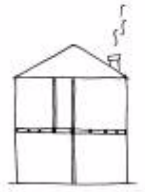
The external decorations act as a protective coat for the building from the elements. Where this protective covering has failed, such as with flaking paintwork, the elements will infiltrate the structure. This is of particular concern as water is one of the major factors in damage to any structure.

Redecoration is required to the fascias and soffit boards or replacement dependent upon which is the most economic.

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 Fascias and Soffits and Windows and Doors section.

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 the ceilings appeared in average condition, a plaster finish has been used – commonly in this type of construction it is applied directly to the concrete ceiling / structure. In some cases condensation can occur depending upon how you use the property. From our visual inspection a textured paint finish has been used commonly known as artex which can hide defects although more importantly in this instance old artex can contain some asbestos; we have been advised it was in use up to the early 1980s.

> **ACTION REQUIRED**: We would recommend a skim-coat of plaster is added over the textured paint (artex/asbestos), certainly don't rub it down!

Internal Walls and Partitions

Generally solid. In this age of building they are likely to be blockwork.

Perimeter Walls

These are plastered, from the walls where the skim-coat had come away this looked to be a three coat plaster system. Where the skim-coat has come away needs replastering as we are sure you are aware.

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.

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

We assume that the ground floor construction is a suspended timber floor. As you are aware, we cut a hole in the bathroom floor to look underneath it and the area we could see was in acceptable condition all things considered.

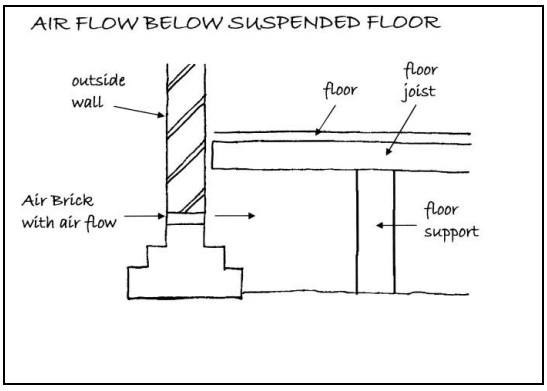
ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regards to putting a vinyl over this floor rather than a tile.

Sinking bathroom floor

Under bathroom floor

Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined

A suspended timber floor usually consists of timbers spanning the ground floor, supported on piers/ walls (usually brickwork), vented via airbricks within the walls.



Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with fitted carpets, floor coverings, and a laminated flooring to the kitchen and lounge area which may well be hiding some defects. The comments we have made are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction. We would emphasise that we have not opened up the floors in any way or lifted any floorboards.

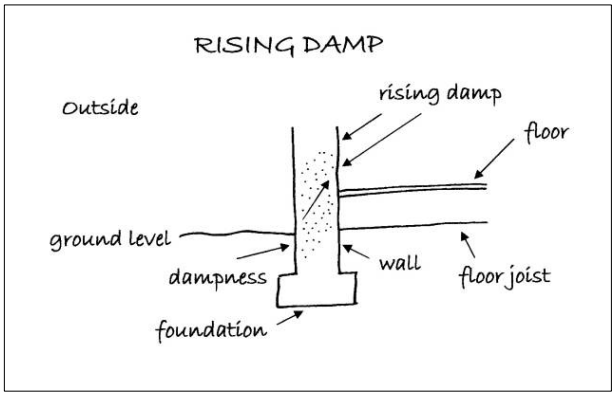
DAMPNESS

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

Rising Damp

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

There is now much debate over whether true rising damp does exist after research over a 10 year period.



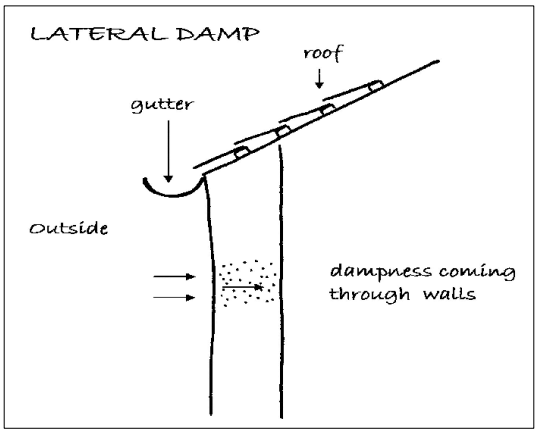
The readings we obtained indicated that there is minor dampness in the property mainly due to the sloping site and the damp proof course being a bit low in some areas. We feel that most people would be able to live with this however we haven't see the property when it rains!

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend adding a French drain. Please do stand outside the property the next time it rains heavily.

Checking for dampness with an electronic conductivity meter

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.



A visual inspection was carried out. No significant penetrating/lateral dampness was seen.

Condensation

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

We noted condensation to the property.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments in the executive summery.

Condensation very much 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.

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

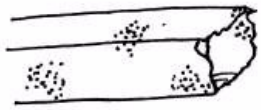
This section looks at the doors, the stairway, the skirting boards and the kitchen to give a general overview of the internal joinery's condition.

Kitchen

From our cursory visual inspection the kitchen looked in average condition, although it has suffered from some general day-to-day marks. 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 over-view of the condition. Please also see the External Fascias and Soffits and Windows and Doors Section.

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.

In the areas visually inspected no evidence was found of any significant dry rot. Please note we have not inspected the roof. We opened up a small section of the floor, in this area we didn't see any dry rot.

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.

In the areas visually inspected no evidence was found of any significant wet rot with the exception of possibly the fascias and soffits and some to the floor.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please read our comments within the Executive Summary.

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.

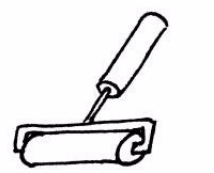
We saw no woodworm. Our main inspection is normally in the roof; as you are aware we haven't gained access to the roof area but we couldn't see any in the floor. In this age of property woodworm is unlikely as the timbers are usually pre-treated.

ACTION REQUIRED: If you wish to be 100 per cent certain that there is no woodworm we would have to gain access to the roof area and re-inspect.

When you are taking up carpets and floor coverings, floor surfaces should be carefully examined for any signs of insect infestation (small holes). We would ask that you do call us back as you need to be aware that there are 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.

INTERNAL DECORATIONS



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

The decoration is average to poor condition depending upon the room and your taste in decoration. 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.

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 (Home Information Packs) Report

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

Roof Insulation

We would normally comment on the roof insulation in this section but, as this is a ground floor flat, you are effectively insulated by the concrete floor in the flat above as well as you heating their flat!

Walls

Whilst the cavity wall construction allows the opportunity to put insulation in, in this age of property it was not originally common practice. Without opening up the wall we cannot confirm if insulation has been added or not.

> **ACTION REQUIRED**: We would recommend that you have quotes for filling the cavity with insulation.

Windows

The windows are double glazed and therefore have reasonable thermal efficiency. The windows do not have trickle vents to aid the ventilation balance and therefore condensation is more likely.

Services

We would always recommend that the boiler is serviced within the first year of occupation. Service records should be obtained. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently.

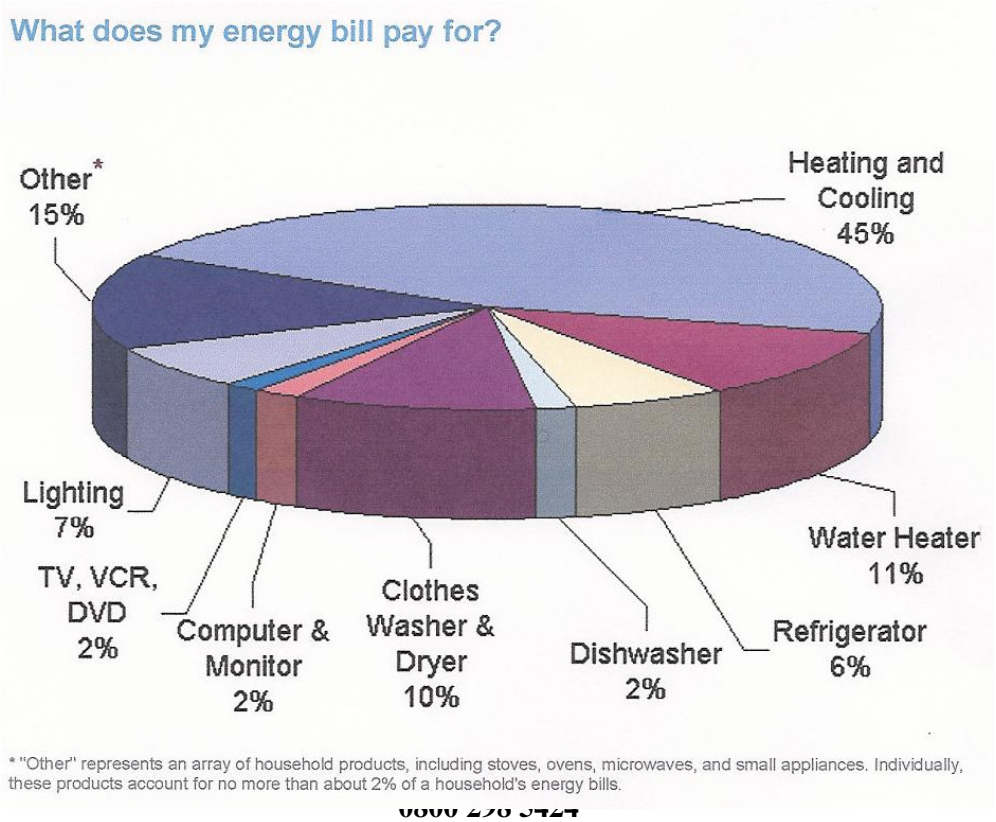
Summary

Assuming the above assumptions are correct we believe the property to be in slightly below average condition due to not having any wall insulation. Again this is an assumption!

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

> *HTTP//www.est.org.uk, which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*
>
> *or alternatively www.cat.org.uk*
>
> *or www.ecocentre.org.uk for an alternative technological view.*

Finally, we would advise that an energy rating is required for future house sales.



OTHER MATTERS

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

Fire Systems and Smoke Alarms

We are a strong believer that where properties are multi occupied, i.e. there is more than one resident or tenancy, that interlinked radio optical smoke/heat detectors are installed. If one alarm detects a fire all alarms go off alerting all of the properties if there is a fire anywhere within the building. We would recommend the mains powered units are used (never forget to change batteries again). Please contact us if you require help with stockists or do an internet search using 'interlinked radio smoke/heat alarms'. In addition without wishing to over labour the point, a plan should there be a fire.

ACTION REQUIRED: We strongly recommend a shared fire system is added.

Asbestos

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

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments on the Fascias and Soffits and the service duct. If you wish to confirm you are 100 percent free of asbestos you need to have an asbestos survey carried out.

SERVICES

This survey does not include any specialist reports on the electricity supply and circuits, heating or drainage, as they were not requested. The comments that follow are based upon a visual inspection carried out as part of the overall Building Survey.

Services and specialist installations have been visually inspected. It is impossible to examine every detail of these installations without partially dismantling the structure. Tests have not been applied. Conclusive tests can only be undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. The vendor/seller should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

ELECTRICITY

It is strange to think that electricity only started to be used in domestic properties at the turn of the 19th 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 a cupboard off the hallway. We would date the fuse board as being from the 2000s and, whilst not the best now available, it is reasonable.

ACTION REQUIRED: Ideally update the fuse board to the best available. Remember that you will have some dated wiring in this age of property.

Fuse Board

Earth Test

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

ACTION REQUIRED: If there is no record of an electrical test having been undertaken within the last five years, it is recommended that the installation be tested by a competent electrician (NICEIC registered) and all recommendations implemented.

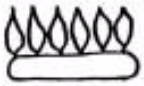
Earth test

Thereafter, the installation should be re-tested every five years.

Also note that Building Regulations require certain electrical work to be certified by an approved contractor. Please see the appendices at the end of this survey for further details.

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

GAS



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

All gas appliances, pipework and flues should be the subject of an annual service by a Gas Safe registered heating engineer; works to any gas appliance by an unregistered person is illegal. Unless evidence can be provided to confirm that there has been annual servicing we would recommend that you commission such a service prior to use to ensure safe and efficient operation.

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

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 Pressure

Water pressure seemed reasonable when we turned the taps on, it is important to establish the pressure of the water particularly if you are keen on showers as you did mention this.

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!).

We have not used a listening stick to check for water leaks

Plumbing

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

Heating

The boiler was located in the garage, it is manufactured by Baxi which is a make and model that we commonly come across. Our limited inspection of the hot water and central heating system revealed no evidence to suggest any serious defects. You will of course be more aware of this as you will become a regular user of the system. We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

Internal radiators

We noted that there are a fair number of internal radiators. The radiators would normally be positioned under the window, which helps circulation of the warm air. These radiators may not warm the property to the heat that you desire.

Internal radiators

Internal radiators are generally used by plumbers to reduce costs (less pipe work) and save time (less pipe work). Sometimes dampness (what's known as cold bridging) occurs; we have personally had this problem and ended up moving the radiators to the traditional location under the window.

Cold bridging defined
This is where a colder element within a structure such as a lintel or an aluminium window allows the transfer of coldness which results in condensation.

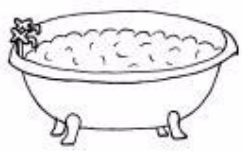
Ten Minute Heating Test

We turned the heating on in the bedroom to carry out thermal imaging. The property warmed up nicely. We mentioned moving radiators – it may well be worth you considering double panel convection radiators when you change the position of the radiators.

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

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

BATHROOM

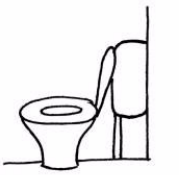


In this section we consider the overall condition of the sanitary fittings such as the bathroom, the kitchen, the utility room and the cloakroom.

There is an internal bathroom, we are not overly keen on internal bathrooms as they do tend to attract condensation. The bathroom requires some work as you are aware to the floor and we believe you wish to alter it to a shower unit in due course. What we would recommend is a vinyl floor is put down as soon as possible.

Finally, you do need to ensure that what is present is watertight and we would recommend bathroom seals are properly made and maintained at the junctions between wall surfaces and baths and showers etc. Mastic is relatively cheap and stops further water going on to the already damp floor. 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.

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 property has mains drainage and that the foul drains discharge into a public sewer; this should have been confirmed by your Legal Advisor prior to exchange of contracts, who should also have provided information in respect of any common or shared drains including liability for the maintenance and upkeep of the same.

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.

To the rear of the property there was an inspection chamber which we assume serves the buildings, although as you aware during our water test (the running of the taps and the tipping of water down the downpipes) no water came out so it may well be your neighbours man hole only.

Inspection Chamber / Manhole One located to the rear of the right hand neighbours garden

We duly lifted the manhole/ inspection chamber cover and found the drain to be clear, we noted it was finished in concrete.

Manhole which is located to the rear of the right hand next door neighbours garden

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.

As you are aware during the rainwater test no water came through the man hole so it may well be that you have a soakaway or it feeds directly into the nearby stream.

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

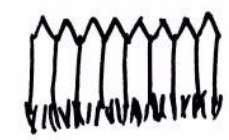
Please also see our comments within the Gutters and Downpipes section.

OUTSIDE AREAS

GARAGES/ PARKING

There is a garage and parking for one vehicle to the front of the property. Please also see our comments in the Executive Summary with regards to the garage flat roof.

EXTERNAL AREAS



Rear Garden

As noted you are sitting on a sloping site and as such rainwater will want to get from the top of the slope to the bottom of the slope through your garden.

Boundaries:

Typically the left hand boundary as you face the property is yours, this should be shown on your deeds.

Finally, your Legal Advisor should have made enquiries as to where your legal boundaries are together with any potential liability with regard to any shared structures, access ways etc.

Neighbours

We had a brief chat with your upstairs neighbour and your left hand neighbour. In both cases we would recommend a cup of tea meeting just to go through bits and pieces that we have found within this survey.

POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

We would normally give points for your Legal Advisor but as you already own the property this seems a pointless exercise.

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

If you would like any further advice on any of the issues discussed (or indeed any that have not been discussed!) then please do not hesitate to contact us on **0800 298 5424.**

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

APPENDICES

LIMITATIONS

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

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

The report has been prepared in accordance with our Conditions of Engagement and should be regarded as a comment on the overall condition of the property and the quality of its structure and not as an inventory of every single defect. It relates to those parts of the property that were reasonably and safely accessible at the time of the inspection, but you should be aware that defects can subsequently develop particularly if you do not follow the recommendations.

ENGLISH LAW

We would remind you that this report should not be published or reproduced in any way without the surveyor's expressed permission and is governed by English Law and any dispute arising there from shall be adjudicated upon only by the English Courts.

SOLE USE

This report is for the sole use of the named Client and is confidential to the Client and his professional advisors. Any other persons rely on the Report at their own risk.

ONLY HUMAN!

Although we are pointing out the obvious, our Surveyors obviously can't see through walls, floors, heavy furniture, fixed kitchen units etc. they have therefore made their best assumptions in these areas.

As this is a one off inspection, we cannot guarantee that there are no other defects than those mentioned in the report and also that defects can subsequently develop.

WEATHER

It was a dry but cold day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

Our weather seems to be moving towards the extremities from relatively mid range. A few interesting facts in Britain over the years have been:

2000	Wettest year on record at the time
2003	Driest year on record at the time
2004	Wettest August on record at the time
2004	Boscastle was the worst flash flood on record at the time
2005	Third driest year on record at the time
2006	Warmest year recorded on record at the time
July 2006	Hottest July on record at the time
2006	Hottest autumn on record at the time
2007	Warmest spring on record at the time
2007	Wettest June on record at the time
April '06-April '07	Hottest 12 months on record at the time
2008	
2009	Third wettest August since 1956
2010	Heaviest snowfall in March since 1991
	Britain faces one of the coldest winters for 100 years
References	BBC News www.bbc.co.uk

This may have adverse effects on lots of buildings in years to come.

NOT LOCAL

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

OCCUPIED PROPERTY

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

INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited as we were unable to view the roof space and we have only opened up a small area of the floors.

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.

General Information on Living in Leased Properties

Living in Multi Occupied Properties

- As a leasehold flat owner, you usually own and are responsible for the maintenance of everything within its four walls, including floorboards and plasterwork, but not usually the external or structural walls.

The landlord, who can be a person, a company, a local authority or a housing association, owns the structure and common parts of the building and the land it stands on and is responsible for its maintenance.

According to independent advice agency the Leasehold Advisory Service (Lease), it's now becoming quite common for the leaseholders to own the freehold of the building through a residents' management company, effectively becoming their own landlord.

- A lease is a contract between the leaseholder and the landlord, giving conditional ownership for a fixed period of time. It is the key to all the responsibilities and obligations of both the leaseholder and the landlord and should spell out what you can expect from the landlord in terms of services.

No two leases are the same, so it is essential you read yours carefully to find out exactly what your rights and responsibilities are. Get advice if unsure about any legal language.

You can go to Lease (lease-advice.org) for free advice.

- Your contractual rights laid out in the lease normally entitle you to expect the landlord to maintain and repair the building and manage the common parts such as grounds, staircases and hallways.

At the same time, you will be required to keep the inside of the flat in good order, to behave in a neighbourly manner, to pay a share of the costs of maintaining and running the building and not to do certain things, such as sub-let, without the land-lord's consent.

- Because leasehold is a tenancy, it is subject to the payment of a rent – which may be nominal. Ground rent is a specific requirement of the lease and must be paid on the due date.

- Service charges are payable by the leaseholder to the landlord for all the services they provide, including maintenance and repairs, insurance of the building and, in some cases, provision of central heating, lifts, lighting and cleaning of common areas etc. Service charges usually also include the costs of management, either by the landlord or by a professional managing agent.

Details of what can and cannot be charged by the landlord and the proportion of the charge to be paid by the individual leaseholder are all set out in the lease. So do read it very carefully.

All maintenance costs are met by the leaseholders and landlords normally make no financial contribution. Service charges can vary from year to year and can go up and down with no limit other than that they are "reasonable".

Most modern leases allow for the landlord to collect service charges in advance, repaying any surplus or collecting any shortfall at the end of the year.

- The lease normally obliges the landlord to take out insurance for the building and common parts and gives them the right to recover the cost of the premium through service charges. The policy doesn't usually cover the possessions of individual leaseholders.

- Many leases provide for the landlord to collect sums in advance to create a reserve fund, ensuring that enough money is available for future scheduled major works such as external decoration. The lease will set out the sums involved and when regular maintenance works are due.

- Leaseholders have powerful rights to challenge service charges they feel are unreasonable at Leasehold Valuation Tribunals (LVTs), which provide a relatively informal way to resolve residential leasehold disputes.

Application to LVTs can be made under many different laws and on many subjects. LVTs can determine, among other things, the reasonableness of a service charge and whether it is payable and disputes relating to insurance.

Lease publishes useful leaflets, which are downloadable from its website, on LVTs.

- Some landlords carry out the management of the property themselves but many appoint a managing agent to manage and maintain the building on behalf of the landlord in accordance with the terms of lease, current relevant legislation and codes of practice.

The agent takes instruction from the landlord, not the leaseholders, but should be constantly aware of the leaseholders' wishes and requirements. The agent will receive a fee which is usually paid by leaseholders as part of the service charges.

- There is no statutory regulation of managing agents. Some are members of professional organisations such as ARMA, the Association of Residential Managing Agents and agree to abide by its own code of practice and that of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

- If there is a problem with management services, the leaseholder's argument is not with the agent but with the landlord, who has ultimate responsibility for the full and proper management of the property.

Leaseholders with such complaints are advised to discuss their situation with Lease before contacting their landlord. In extreme cases where the landlord will not meet his obligations to maintain the buildings and communal areas in accordance with the lease, it may be necessary to take action through the county court. Lease can give in-depth advice on such a course of action.

- For disgruntled leaseholders who have suffered long-term bad management from landlords or who believe they could do a better job at a lower cost, there is another option.

Since September 2003, flat owners in England and Wales have been able to exercise the Right to Manage (RTM) and take over the management of their building without having to prove any fault on the part of their landlord.

RTM, part of a package of reforms stemming from the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, empowers leaseholders to take control of the running of their building without having to stump up large sums of money to buy the freehold. They also gain better control over insurance costs and the level at which service charges are set.

Exercising this right is a relatively simple process. A formal notice is served on the landlord by an RTM company which has been set up by a sufficient number of qualifying tenants – leaseholders whose lease was originally granted for a term of more than 21 years. For details, see the Lease website.

But don't think of RTM as easy DIY management and a way of getting rid of all managing costs. Managing a building involves running a complex business and complying with a raft of legislation and there will always be managing costs. Lease advises leaseholders exercising this right to appoint a professional to manage their block.

THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

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

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

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

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.

2. A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the building regulations.

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

Work You Cannot do Yourself

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

INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

www.landreg.org.uk

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

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 and www.nationwide.co.uk

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

www.hometrack.co.uk

From what we can see this is an internet based company who say they offer independent property research (in fact they say they are the only independent company), although they also advise that they are part of a property related group that has bought and sold over 60 million pounds worth of residential property, which indicates that they may have a vested interest. They do also comment that they have carried out their own independent surveys and they have at least two Hometrack recommended estate agents in each postcode area. We would refer you to the 'About us' section within their website to understand better where their information is coming from. We would comment that we have been pleasantly surprised with the quality of information provided by the company.

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.

http://www.nethouseprices.com/

This website offers information on land registry recorded property sales, by postcode or address.

www.globrix.com

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

French Drain

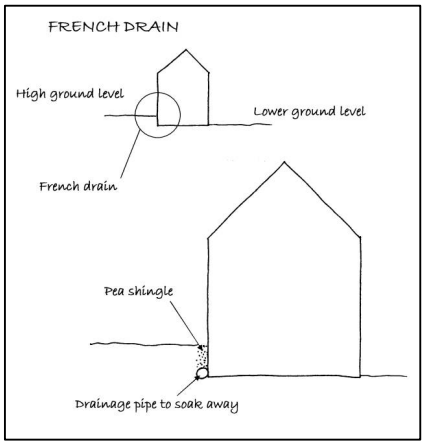
Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

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

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

What use is a French drain?

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



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

French drains must be on a slope

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

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

The French drain system that we would recommend

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

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

The French pond!

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