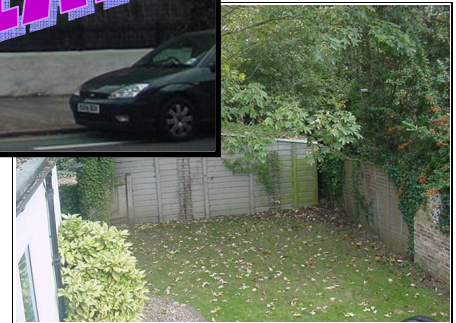


RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

Surbiton, Surrey
KT6



FOR

Mr G

Prepared by:

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT FORMAT

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

GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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

TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED

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

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area. The sketches are not 100% technically accurate; we certainly would not expect you to carry out work based upon the sketches alone.

ORIENTATION

Any reference to left or right is taken from the front of the property, including observations to the rear, which you may not be able to physically see from the front of the property.

ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have used the term **ACTION REQUIRED** where we believe that there are items that you should carry out action upon or negotiate upon prior to purchasing the property.

Where a problem is identified, we will do our best to offer a solution. However, with most building issues, there are usually many ways to resolve them dependent upon cost, time available and the length of time you wish the repair/replacement to last.

SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

The property is detached and is three storeys in height with a basement. The property has been converted into four flats. This survey is of the ground floor flat.

We are advised the property is Leasehold/Shared Freehold. We have not seen copies of the lease/shared freehold, but we would be happy to comment if the details are duly forwarded to us. As the property is Leasehold/Shared Freehold you will no doubt have a shared responsibility for common areas/common components. Common areas/common components include not only the access stairways and corridors but also other areas of shared use such as the roof structure and external walls and the drainage for example.

Clarification needs to be sought with regards to access and shared areas.

We are advised that the property was built in 1780. If the age of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

We have not found the property on BritishListedBuildings.co.uk but nevertheless your legal advisor needs to check and confirm as if it is listed it's more onerous. It may well be in a conservation area and again repairs will be more onerous and there will be limitations on what you can do.

Putting Life into Perspective!

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

1783	Britain recognised American Independence
1750	The start of the Industrial Revolution
1793 – 1800	The Grand Union Canal was built
1801	First Census
1830	George IV dies

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front of flat



Rear of flat



Front of property



Left hand view of property



Rear of flat



Rear of property

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

These need to be checked and confirmed by your Legal Advisor.

Ground Floor

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance Hallway
- 2) Lounge
- 3) Bathroom
- 4) Kitchen
- 5) Walk through Bedroom
- 6) Main Bedroom

Basement

We have access via floor flaps leading to a stairwell into the basement that is situated on the left hand side footprint of the property.

Your legal advisor needs to confirm that you have rights and permission to utilise this area.

Often with a shared freehold all the areas outside the original accommodation areas are also shared i.e. the roof space, the basement the drains, the roof etc.

Shared Areas

Shared parking to the front of the parking and shared gardens to the rear of the property. (All needs to be confirmed by your legal advisor).

INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

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

Ground Floor



Lounge



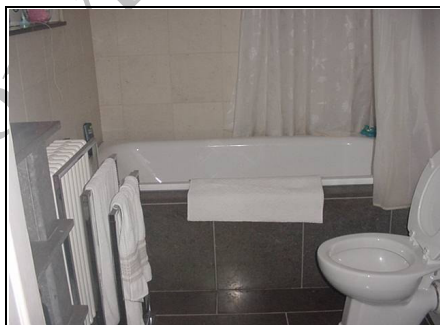
Kitchen



Main Bedroom



Walk through Bedroom



Bathroom



Stairs to basement

Basement



Basement



Boiler in basement



Sump Pump

Communal Areas (such things as Entrance Area, Lift Space and Communal Garden)



Garden



Parking

SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

Chimneys:	Rendered chimneys
Main Roof:	Shallow pitched concrete tile roof
Lower Roof:	Flat felt roof
Gutters and Downpipes:	Cast iron and plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Cast iron
Walls:	Painted render (construction unknown)
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber
Windows and Doors:	Painted timber single and double glazed windows

Internal

Ceilings:	lath and plaster / plasterboard (assumed)	
Walls:	Gypsum plaster finish and mixture of solid and studwork (assumed)	
Floors:	First Floor	Joist and floorboards with embedded timbers (assumed not seen)
	Ground Floor:	Joist and floorboards with embedded timbers (assumed)
	Basement:	Not viewed assumed concrete.

Services

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (assumed). The Electrics are on the right hand side as you enter the door. The boiler is underground and is a Valiant boiler.

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

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



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

The Good

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

- 1.0) The property has larger windows and typically will have more space than newer properties, both in the actual size of the rooms and the height of the rooms.
- 2.0) The property has good natural light due to the bay windows (remember when this was built we did not have electric lighting and so they had to utilise natural light).
- 3.0) The property has potential although the options may not be economical viable compared with the value that they'll add to the property. They may be worth doing if the property is considered a home but not if it's considered an investment.

Options considered

- 3.1) Lowering the basement to make habitable rooms.
- 3.2) To increase the floor height
- 3.3) To carry out internal alterations and extend such as changing the kitchen for the rear bedroom.

As discussed, the difficulty will be that agreement will have to be made with other parties including the local authority with regard to building regulations, planning permission and with adjoining owners with regard to party walls. The alterations may not add the same value when compared with what they cost.

The Bad

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

1.0) Cracking and movement to the structure

We can see that over the years there has been cracking and movement to the structure. As discussed we believe partly the reason for the cracking is the harder cement that has been used on the external of this old property which is never a good idea as older properties need to move and breathe and a lime based render is more appropriate.



Cracking near rear fire escape.

There are also a combination of other issues that caused the movement everything from

1.1 Conversions and amendments over the years.

1.2 The tree next door is closer than most insurance companies would like and certainly within influencing distance and is likely to affected the structure

1.3 There is a large basement under the property.



Crack around window
Pen identifies the line of cracking.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to ensure that the existing owners have placed an insurance claim with regard to the movement. As we have only had a one off inspection it is not possible to identify conclusively from this. Normally monitoring would take place for typically a year.



Crack above window

ANTICIPATED COST: You need to ensure that an insurance claim has been made in writing and that the insurance company are happy to commit to monitoring the property. There is likely to be an excess cost to the insurance which should be reduced from the price of the property.

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.



Crack above bay window

2.0) Dampness found internally?

We were surprised to find we were getting dampness readings internally. We suspect this relates to walls absorbing dampness from such things as the clothes drying and the humidity from the bathroom and the kitchen that is unable to dissipate via the walls which have cement render externally.



Rising damp

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to get rid of the humid air as quickly as possible. We recommend humidity controlled extract fans to the bathroom and the kitchen and any other rooms you intend to dry clothes in!

ANTICIPATED COST: A few hundred pounds. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report

3.0) External Joinery

The external joinery is not in the best of conditions. Black painted timber always seems to deteriorate quite quickly. In some areas we were able to push the knife into the timber indicating it is soft. To the rear door we were able to push it right through the timber.



Knife Test

ACTION REQUIRED: general redecoration of the external timbers and making good of the timber.

ANTICIPATED COST: please obtain quotations.

Please see the Windows and Doors Section of this Report

4.0) Fire alarm in multi occupier properties?

We have seen next to no provisions in regards to fire. We would recommend hard wire fire alarm systems that let you know where the fire is taking place in a property that is multi occupied such as this and where you have separate entrances and therefore won't get to know the other occupants.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your sinking fund should be set up to build up funds to install a good quality fire alarm system.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the range of £3000 - £8000 depending upon your requirements etc: please obtain quotations.

Sinking fund defined

This is building up funds for large property repairs.

Please see the Other Matters Section of this Report.

The Ugly

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

1.0) 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. For example High Level Work

2.0) High level work

Property Management

High level work is always expensive as it's likely to need scaffolding.

We typically find with this age of property that there is some high level work required:

1. to the chimneys
2. to the roof

3. to the render. For repairs needed see item number one in the bad section.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to establish if the existing property owners have a planned maintenance programme to advise on what maintenance they have planned to carry out(via the sinking fund).

The question needs to be asked have they considered planned maintenance at all or do they simply have a fund for day to day repairs?

ACTION REQUIRED: If this property isn't managed properly it will in our opinion devalue the property as a whole over the years and ultimately reduce the price that can be sought. You do need to have a chat with the tenants management company (normally someone who lives in the property) and a professional management company if one is appointed.

Please see the Walls Section of this Report

3.0) Dampness to the basement

We found dampness to various areas in the basement. We are aware that the present owner has had it tanked or to be more accurate partially tanked. The basement will need dry lining to make it useable. Note, we have said useable and not habitable as local authority approval such as building regulations permission and planning permission will need to be obtained to make the room habitable.



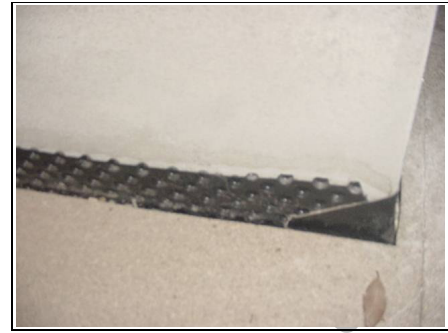
Dampness coming through tanking

The local authority are likely to need, as you are, the floor to ceiling height increasing, better ventilation and natural light if at all possible which will mean digging out the front or rear of the property.

We appreciate that bringing the basement rooms into use could add value to the property however it may not add as much value as it costs. You also need to get the agreement of all the shared/freeholders.

We recommend the following actions:

1. Establish you have the legal ownership
2. Obtain quotation for lowering the floor. This is the most typical way that such alterations are carried out. However remember you have the risk that you could cause disturbances to the property as a whole and then be liable for the damage.



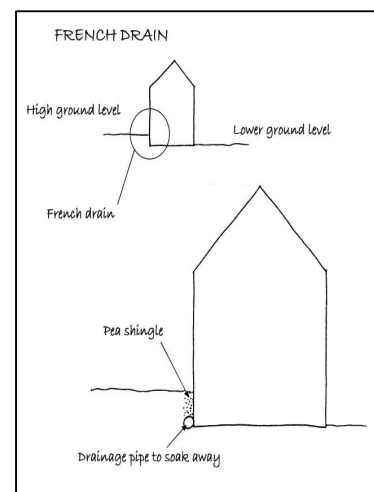
Partially tanked

3. We would also recommend a schedule of condition of the whole property carried out by a surveying company as signed and agreed and that would form part of the party wall act that you need to follow when carrying out this work. As discussed the other option is to increase the floor height. The difficulty with this is the floor in this age property may well be bonded into the outer walls giving some structural support to it. You need to open up areas to check and confirm this. With the increasing of the floor height you would then have to alter all the door positions including the structural lintels above them. Again you would need to inform everyone and in both cases you would need local authority and party wall approval.

3.0) Reducing dampness in the basement

You could reduce the dampness in the basement by adding French drains externally.

This isn't the perfect solution but we do think it would partly reduce the pressure of water. Please see the Appendices at the back of the report.



Other Items

Moving on to more general information.

Living in Multi-Occupied Leasehold/Shared Freehold Properties

This is more a statement of information. There can be problems living in multi occupied properties with anything from noisy neighbours to non-contribution to the 'sinking fund'. The property is Leasehold/Shared Freehold, which is very different to having a Freehold property, where you can almost literally do as you like (within the scope of the Law!).

Please see the attachment in the Appendices at the end of this Report.

Alterations to adjoining properties

It probably goes without saying but we have only had access to survey the ground floor apartment and we do not know what alterations and amendments have been carried out affecting the apartments above which could affect this one including for example the removal of chimneys and the removal of walls.

Sinking Fund / Planned Maintenance - Future Work

We have already spoken about sinking funds within the executive summary. We would reiterate with properties such as this there should be a planned maintenance program. We would expect this to be looking at and considering any anticipated works and associated costs at least ten years in advance.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor to confirm future planned maintenance costs and expenditure.

ANTICIPATED COST: Your Legal Advisor to confirm.

Communal Areas

We couldn't establish exactly what communal areas you had and in this case you will need to know rights of access. Also as mentioned several times do you own the basement area or just have rights to use it?

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal advisor to establish what you have shared access to and they need to establish ownership of the basement.

Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.

Reactive / Day-to-Day Maintenance and Cyclical Maintenance

By reactive / day-to-day maintenance we mean work of a more immediate nature, such as repairs to leaking showers or blocked drains or entry door systems. By cyclical maintenance we mean maintenance carried out on a regular basis such as to the fire alarm system and the lifts and the garden maintenance.

Dependent upon the terms of your lease/shared freehold agreement some of this may come under your responsibility but be managed for you and re-charged back to you by the Management Company.

ACTION REQUIRED: Typically there is a Service Charge for day-to-day maintenance / reactive maintenance and also cyclical maintenance. Your Legal Advisor to confirm costs.

Maintenance

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

This type of property will require ongoing maintenance and repair and a budget for such work must be allowed to ensure it is maintained in good condition. This will prevent undue and unnecessary deterioration.

Services

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

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Electrics

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection of the electrics (this is commented upon in the Electrics Section of the report) we also need to advise you of the following:

ACTION REQUIRED: As the property is changing occupancy the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) recommend an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor carry out an inspection, test and report.

Heating

We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

Drainage

We would recommend a close camera TV report to establish the condition of the drains. This is something the property management company may already have.

Water Supply

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

DIY/Handyman Type Work

In this section we would normally comment upon smaller/less skilled jobs that you can carry out by yourself or get a handyman in to do, however under a normal lease/shared freehold (assuming a full repairing and insuring lease/shared freehold) these type of jobs are typically the responsibility of the Landlord (albeit that they usually recharge it to you) with usually only the internal of the property being your responsibility.

Purchase Price

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

Every Business Transaction has a Risk

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

Estimates of Costs

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour and estimates can of course vary from area to area when giving a general indication of costs. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £100 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

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

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 comment that you have offered a price for this building based on the building being in average condition. We feel certain areas are below average condition and there is a certain element of risk to be taken.

There is next to no value in the basement as it stands other than for storage. You therefore need to carry out careful research with regards to your costs and the benefit to you of having the basement area altered to its true potential.

We have seen some fantastic basement kitchens over the years they really can open up and change a property. In this case the alterations may well cost more than the value they add to the property. We have already mentioned you need to decide if this is worth carrying out for you. To us it really depends on whether this is considered a home or an investment.

As a general comment, although we have mentioned that you should get quotes much of the work we are commenting on will be the overall responsibility of the Landlord/Managing Agent, albeit that they would recharge it to the Leaseholders/Shared Freeholders. The idea of obtaining quotations is to allow you to negotiate with regard to the price of the property. We would always recommend you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion.

We would ask that you read the Report 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 / SHARED FREEHOLD

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

ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?

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

SOLICITOR/LEGAL ADVISOR

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

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS

This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement for 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 with your property purchase - just phone us.

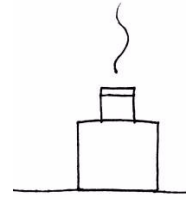
**THE DETAILED PART OF THE REPORT
FOLLOWS, WORKING FROM THE TOP
OF THE PROPERTY DOWNWARDS**



Copyrighted

EXTERNAL

CHIMNEY STACKS AND FLUES



Chimney Stacks

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

We noted two chimneys externally to this property although internally we believe in the past there have been more. They are located in the centre of the property (all directions given as you face the property).

Chimney One – front centre

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



Chimney one

ACTION REQUIRED: As part of the planned maintenance programme it needs to be checked.

Chimney Two – centre rear

This chimney is also painted render finished with no chimney pots but does look to have been capped.

It has a large ariel fixed on by wire which acts like a cheese wire cutting in to the render.



Chimney two

ACTION REQUIRED: from what we can see of the chimney it looks to need venting or else it could cause dampness.

Flashings Defined

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

Flaunchings Defined

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

Render Defined

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

Capping Defined

Capping is a practice used when chimneys are no longer in use to prevent moisture from entering the structure in the form of rainwater via the chimney. This usually involves the closing of the chimney with a tile or slab positioned across. It should include vents to allow air circulation.

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Party Wall

The party wall relates to shared items, such as if you look to carry out alterations to your property you may need to get approval from the owners above you. If you do have any work done on these you will need to deal with the Party Wall Act. Here is a brief explanation of it.

Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

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

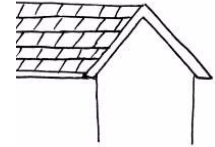
Any work to party structures, such as party walls or party chimney stacks, require agreement under the Party Wall Act. We would be more than happy to offer you help and advice in this matter.

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

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

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ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



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

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

We will consider the roofs in two areas, **the** main roof and the rear flat roof.

Main Roof

The roof is pitched and clad with a shallow pitched concrete tile and from ground level, this looks in average condition considering the roofs age type and style, although we could only see very little of the roof approximately five percent. In fact if you look at the adjacent picture you will see how the shallowness of the roof meant that we had a very poor view. We knocked on the doors of the upper floor flats but no one answered the doors at the time of our inspection.



Picture of main roof

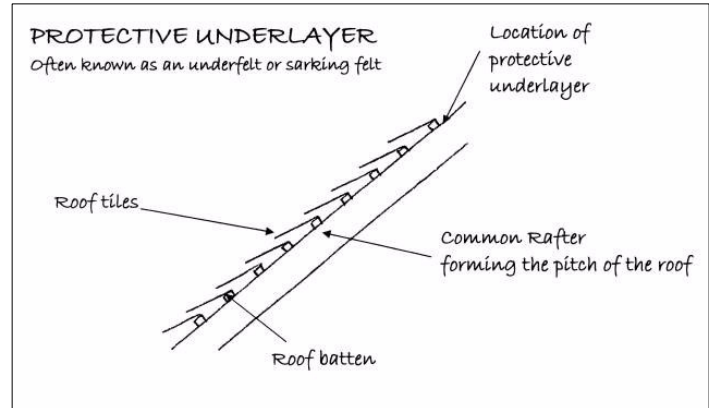
ACTION REQUIRED: We are never happy to survey a property without getting into see the roof void. We would be happy to return but we would recommend you knock on the doors of flats three and four and have a chat with them to see if there are any problems with regard to their roofs.



From this photo you can see the main roof is at various different

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.



We did not have access to the roof to see if there was a protective under layer. However because it has been re-roofed in a concrete tile and typically this was carried out in the 1970's -1980's we would expect to see hessian based bitumen if we did have access to the roof. We would add further that due to the shallowness of pitch in this roof we would typically be asking for vents to be added.

Flat Roof

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.

Whilst the flat roof isn't over your property you are still likely to have shared responsibility for any leaks. We can see this roof has been repaired previously with a mineral felt around the edge and we can also see that it has been re-tarred in some areas. Also the protective shingle layer has started to come off the roof.



Flat roof

Finally we can see that due to the moss sitting on it the flat roof is fairly flat. We knocked on the door of this property during the course of the survey but the owner didn't answer.

ACTION REQUIRED: Preferably your legal advisor should write to the people that occupy this flat to see if there are any problems with the roof. Flat roofs can be costly and this one is a poor quality flat roof.

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

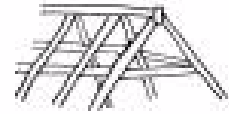
Also it could not be established if there is insulation within the roof or a vapour barrier, without the vapour barrier and combined with inadequate ventilation there will be an increase in the risk of wet or dry rot.

All the roofs were inspected from ground level with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. Flat roofs have been inspected from the fire exit and from ground level.

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

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

ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT



(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)

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

Main Roof

Roof Access

We have been unable to gain access to the main roof however as mentioned you are likely to have a shared responsibility for any problems with it.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would ask your legal advisor to write to the occupiers of number three and number four to confirm that there aren't any problems with the roof and also get the same confirmation from the owner of the ground floor flat. You need to get this in writing as repairs to this roof will be very costly as they are high level.

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GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

Gutters and Downpipes

Cast Iron

The property has cast iron gutters and downpipes and is fairly typical of what we see; they are in below average condition for their age, type and style. They have been poorly repaired in the past which leads us to believe there is no proper maintenance at this property being carried out.



Cast iron gutter

Cast iron of this age will need maintenance. If regularly maintained it will last longer than plastic, in our experience.

There may be some minor leaks but most people would be happy to live with these.

Plastic

There are also some plastic gutters and downpipes which have no doubt replaced the cast iron over the years.

Generally the gutters were blocked with leaves so there may be some minor leaks but most people would be happy to live with these.

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.

As part of a planned maintenance programme with trees nearby you would normally have someone clearing the gutters.

Soil and Vent Pipe

Unusually the property has cast iron soil and vent pipes. We normally find that these have been replaced but we can see some repairs have been carried out to them. Again as with the gutters and downpipes the repairs are what we term as sticking plaster repairs rather than proper repairs.



Cast iron soil and vent pipe

ACTION REQUIRED: Ideally the gutters and downpipes and the soil and vent pipes should be overhauled. We would recommend you set aside a sum of one thousand pounds but equally we would add you have a shared responsibility for this so it shouldn't all be your cost. This is the type of thing that would come out of a sinking fund if there is one.

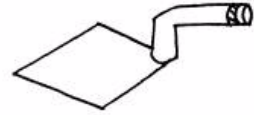


Repairs to soil and vent pipe

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

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WALLS



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

The walls are finished in render and constructed probably of brickwork although we can't be one hundred percent certain.

Render

The external walls are rendered. We are always wary when we see rendered properties as it usually means they have been rendered for a particular reason. In this particular case we believe it is part of the original aesthetics and we would consider the render to be in below average condition

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

In this case we would comment that we could see a few drip details above the windows but we couldn't see a bell mouth detail to the base of the property.

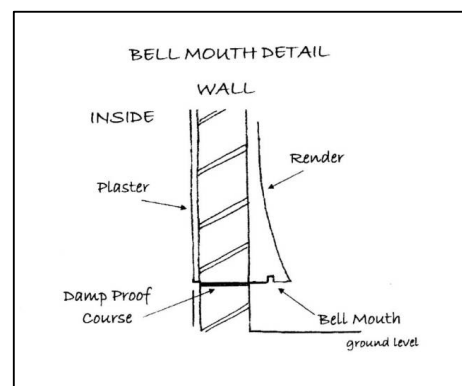


Base of property



Render deteriorating

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly via a ladder. Where the window and door lintels are concealed by render / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels, rubbed brick lintels, stone lintels or metal lintels are



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common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

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

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FOUNDATIONS



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

Foundations

Given the age of the property you may find different depths of foundations. We would expect to find a stepped brick foundation possibly with a bedding of lime mortar and possibly a concrete foundation for the more recent extension for the single storey part of the property (this is not the part you are buying).

Clay

This property stands on London clay. It is, therefore, more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow, etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in London clay areas particularly in older properties such as this with trees close by! Or have been amended and altered!

Building Insurance Policy

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

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

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

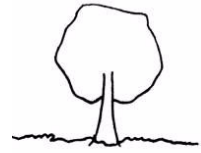
We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance throughout this report.

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

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

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TREES



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

The trees to the front of the property in the neighbour's garden are too close and too high and are within what is termed as influencing distance of the property. Work needs to be carried out on them as it may affect your property first but all the properties as well.

This is where it is important to have a good management company that would write to the neighbours or negotiate with the neighbours

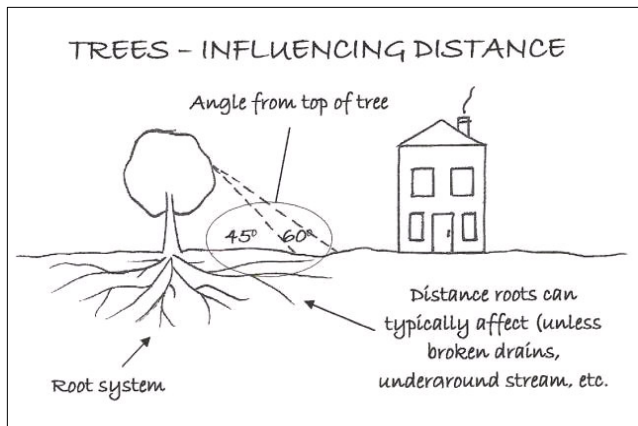
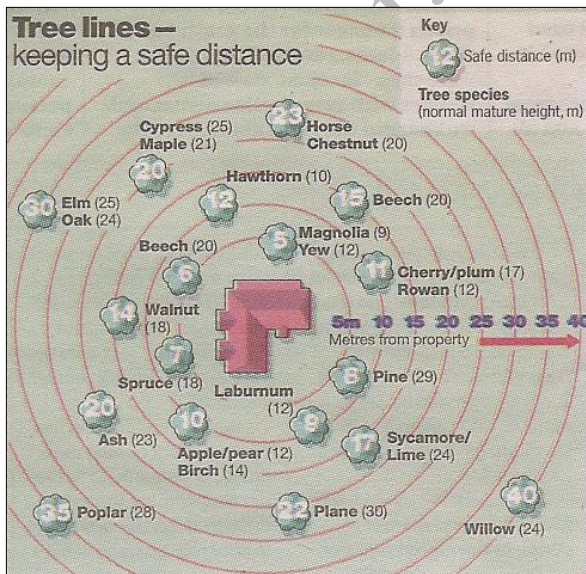
ACTION REQUIRED: It's important that you get it one hundred percent established that next door will maintain their tree and take advice from an arboriculturalist (not a tree surgeon).



Nearby tree



Tree near to property



Influencing Distance Defined

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

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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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DAMP PROOF COURSE



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

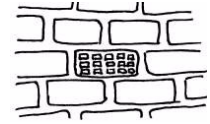
All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case we can't see the damp course due to the render. It is unlikely in a property of this age that it will have a damp proof course.

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

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

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AIRBRICKS



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

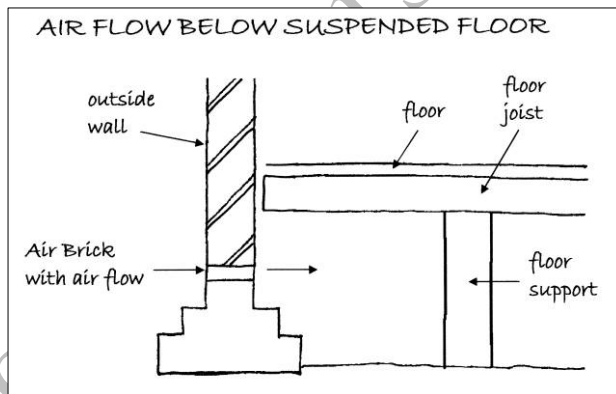
Low Level Air Bricks

The property has a suspended timber floor. You can see under this from within the basement. As with all timber floors it needs an air flow underneath it to reduce the chances of getting wet rot and/or dry rot and/or woodworm. The airbricks are partially blocked you need to open these up.

To some extent it has an air flow from the opening of the basement that has taken place. We feel it would benefit the property if the air bricks externally were opened up as well



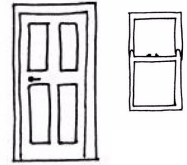
View under the floor



Partially blocked air brick

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

FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



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

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

Fascias and Soffits

The property has a mixture of fascias and soffits. We can see that some of them are timber and some of them are replacement plastic. There are vents to these. We mentioned the shallow pitch of the roof which needs venting. Vents to the soffits such as these are a good way of venting the roof providing they are unblocked. However unfortunately we often find they are blocked with insulation.



Fascias and Soffits

ACTION REQUIRED: Again this is something that would be in the planned maintenance/property maintenance of the property. Check and ensure the roofs are vented.

Windows and Doors

There is a mixture of windows and doors. From the timber sliding sash windows at the front of the property (which leads us to believe it is in a conservation area) to the double glazed windows and doors to the rear of the property.

We would recommend that the front windows are redecorated and repaired and as mentioned and discussed the side window we would upgrade. However it is likely to be affected by conservation area requirements and so will need to be in keeping.

ACTION REQUIRED: You therefore need to speak to the local authority about what they consider to be in keeping. It's unlikely they will let you put plastic windows in.



Timber sash window



Double glazed window

With regard to the plastic windows we would draw your attention to the fact that sealed double glazed units can fail, particularly as a result of poor workmanship during installation. Failure of the seal leads to condensation between the two panes of glass and simply replacing the affected units may not provide a satisfactory long-term solution.

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

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

EXTERNAL DECORATIONS



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

There is a lot of external decoration to this property and it is the sort of thing that needs to have a fund built up within the sinking fund to redecorate on a fairly regular basis. As the redecoration acts as a raincoat, without good quality painting this age and type of render will deteriorate quickly. In addition to this there are some specific areas where there are issues at the moment. For example, the rusting fire escape to the rear of the property which if nothing else looks unsightly.

Finally, ideally external redecoration is recommended every four to five years dependent upon the original age of the paint, its exposure to the elements and the materials properties. Where painting takes place outside this maintenance cycle repairs should be expected. Ideally redecoration should be carried out during the better weather between mid-April and mid-September.

Please see our comments in the External Joinery section.



External of property



Rust on fire escape

INTERNAL



CEILING, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

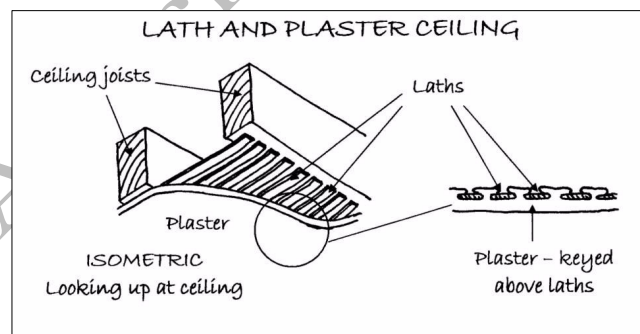
In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions.

Ceilings

From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction we believe that the ceilings are likely to be lath and plaster and plasterboard. However during the conversion and alterations to the property it is often replaced with plasterboard. It is not possible to be a hundred percent certain without opening up the structure.

Lath and Plaster Defined

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



Plasterboard Defined

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

Internal Walls and Partitions

They are a mixture of solid and a hollow construction. Some of the walls are structural, some are non structural and some form part of chimneys. Construction is likely to be brickwork. It is of course impossible to determine the construction without opening up the walls and have therefore taken an educated guess.

Perimeter Walls

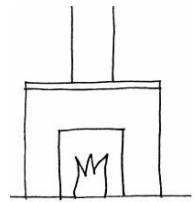
We believe much of the original lime plaster has been replaced, due to the smoothness of the wall, with a gypsum plaster. This doesn't cope with dampness that well. Please note our comments that damp readings were obtained in the perimeter wall.

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

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

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CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



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

The chimney breasts are located to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property) within the two bedrooms and also centrally forming part of the kitchen walls and the living room walls. As mentioned we haven't seen any of the above properties so we can't confirm that they are in place all the way up through the building. However we do note the central chimneys at high level but not the chimneys to the right hand side. This may be because they are partially obscured by the trees or maybe because they have been removed.

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

Finally, we will comment on the condition of the chimney breast where we can see the chimney breast. If we can see a chimney breast has been removed we will inspect for signs of movement and advise. However, often the chimney breasts are hidden and we do not comment as modern techniques for adding support can concealed very well particularly when plastered over.

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

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

Please also see the Chimney Stacks, Flues

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.

Basement

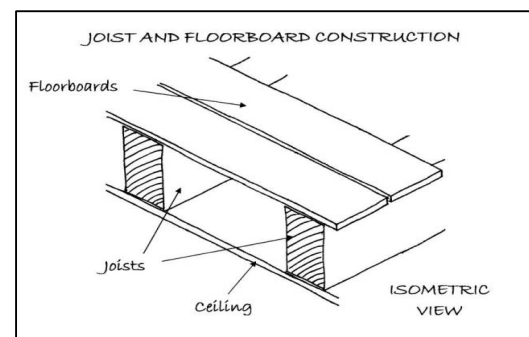
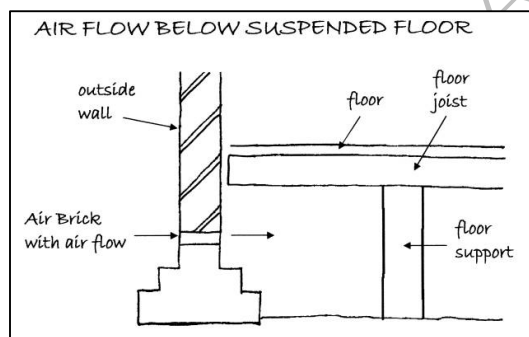
The floor that we could see was finished in a composite floor board sheet. Underneath this there looks to be a proprietary damp proofing of dimpled plastic membrane. Beneath this we assume there is a concrete finish floor, we have not been able to see this.



Concrete floor

Ground Floor

Where we can see it, the ground floor suspended floor is to the right hand side of the property. To the left hand side there are joists and floorboards. We can see light through the existing floors when the basement lights were switched on which is not ideal.



Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with a composite floorboard sheet on the basement floor.

We were able to see the floorboards at ground floor level indicating that the joists run from the front to the rear of the property.



Floorboards to ground floor with light coming through

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.



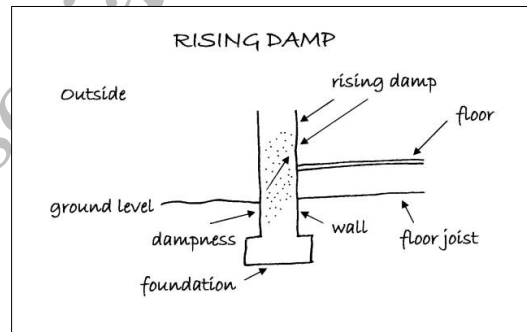
Ground floor being opened to reveal basement

DAMPNESS

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

Rising Damp

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



A random visual inspection and tests with a moisture meter have been taken to the perimeter walls and some internal walls. In this particular case we have found dampness both at basement level and ground floor level. We believe that the dampness at ground floor level relates to condensation. The dampness that you can see in the adjacent photo is in the basement. The dampness is being forced up through the floor.

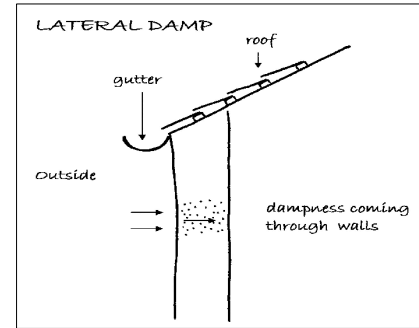


Testing for rising damp

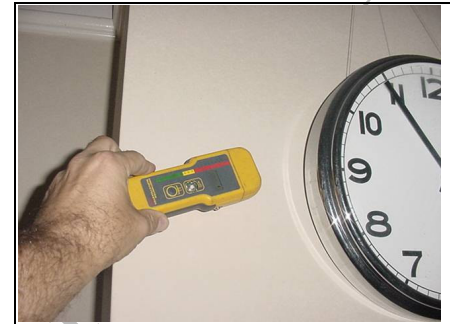
ACTION REQUIRED: We don't think you will be able to stoop the dampness from within the basement as you are likely to be below the water table. However we do believe you could hide it with a suspended floor. This can be quite expensive. Please see the Executive Summary.

Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

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



We used a damp meter on the external walls. We have not found any lateral or penetrating dampness in the property.



Testing for lateral dampness

Condensation

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

At the time of the inspection there were no obvious visual signs of condensation to windows, mirrors etc. However we do think our damp meter picked up condensation within the rear walk through bedroom that related to the clothes that were being dried in the area.

However, condensation depends upon how you utilise the building. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating and ventilation of properties. Normally opening windows first thing in the morning resolves most condensation issues.

Extract fans in kitchens and bathrooms

We would always recommend humidity controlled extract fans in kitchens and bathrooms particularly in a flat such as this where as far as we are aware you don't have anywhere to dry the clothes externally.

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

ANTICIPATED COSTS: A few hundred pounds.

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

INTERNAL JOINERY



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

Doors

The doors are painted hollow core doors sometimes known in the trade as egg box doors as this is what they look like inside.



Internal door

Kitchen

We found the kitchen in average condition, subject of course to some wear and tear as one would expect. We found the black tiles to be slightly out of line. This may be due to the type of tile that has been used not being a constant size. We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.



Kitchen tiles

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

TIMBER DEFECTS



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

Dry Rot

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

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

We would advise that the floors have only been opened up where we accessed the basement. We have had no view of the roof or the other floors in the property.

Wet Rot

*Wet rot, also known by its Latin name *Contiophora puteana*, is far more common than dry rot. Wet rot darkens and softens the wood and is most commonly seen in window and doorframes, where it can relatively easily be remedied. Where wet rot affects the structural timbers in a property, which are those in the roof and the floor areas, it is more serious.*

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

We would advise that the floors have only been opened up where we accessed the basement. We have had no view of the roof or the other floors in the property.

Woodworm



Active woodworm can cause significant damage to timber. There are a variety of woodworm that cause different levels of damage with probably the worst of the most well known being the Death Watch Beetle. Many older properties have woodworm that is no longer active, this can often be considered as part of the overall character of the property.

The main area we normally look for woodworm in is the roof. We have had no access in this instance. We have had access to the floors and they do not show any sign of woodworm.

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

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

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

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

INTERNAL DECORATIONS



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

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

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

BASEMENTS OTHERWISE KNOWN AS CELLARS AND VAULTS!

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

We were pleased to see that a sump pump had been added as we feel should be taken as granted that at some point a cellar will flood and you therefore need to look at ways of managing this i.e. the pump that's present.

The floor system that's been added may mean that there's dampness present underneath the composite floorboard sheets and this is a way of taking it away via the pump.

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

THERMAL EFFICIENCY



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

HIPs

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

Roofs

We have not been able to see in the roofs but effectively you are insulated by the flat above you

Walls

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

Windows

The windows are a mixture of predominately single glazed and therefore will have a poorer thermal efficiency.

Services

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

Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is below average compared with what we typically see. Although because you are the ground floor flat you will be insulated by the flats above you, you may well have coldness coming in via the basement area.

If this is the case we recommend some background heating in the basement area to ensure it doesn't get too damp and you too cold.

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

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

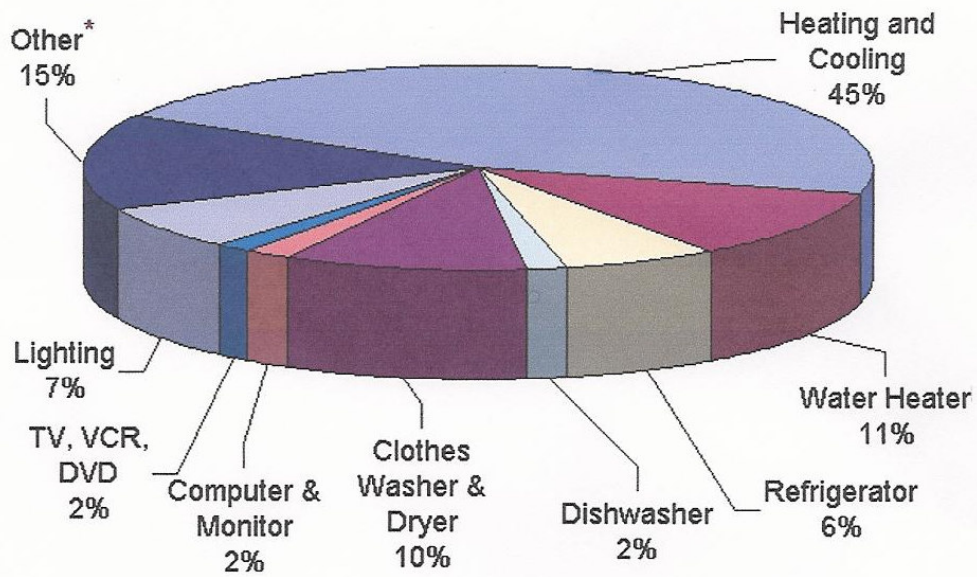
or alternatively www.cat.org.uk

*or Sustainable Energy Without the Hot Air by David J C MacKay
HTTP//www.withouthotair.com/Videos.html to download or buy like we did.*

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

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

What does my energy bill pay for?



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

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OTHER MATTERS



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

Security

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

Fire Systems and Smoke Alarms

With older properties it is particularly important to have a good fire / smoke alarm system, as often they are built from many burnable elements.

Fire Alarms - Multi-occupied Property

We are a strong believer that where properties are multi occupied, i.e. there are more than one resident or tenancy, that the fire alarm system should be interconnected alerting any of the properties if there is a fire anywhere within the building.

In addition to this there should be regular fire alarm drills.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm whether this is the case.

Insurance

As this property is leasehold/shared freehold we assume you have to pay your building insurance via the Management Company or Building Owner. Typically they will arrange for insurance and recharge it to you at a percentage of the cost. You should ensure that they have suitably insured the property.

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

SERVICES

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

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

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ELECTRICITY



It is strange to think that electricity only started to be used in domestic properties at the turn of the 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

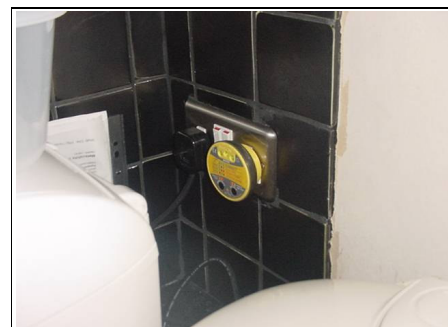
The electric fuses and consumer units were located on the right hand side as you enter the door (all directions given as you face the property). The fuse board looked newish. In a multi occupied property a defective fuse board can be particularly dangerous. So you do need to know the condition of everyone's fuse board within the property. This is part of the information that a good management company would have available.



Fuse Board

Earth Test

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



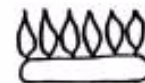
Earth Test

ACTION REQUIRED: As the property is changing occupancy an IEE report should be carried out by a NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor.

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

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

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

We believe that the property has mains gas, located in the cupboard to the left hand side as you enter the property. Unfortunately we weren't able to get this open although we did find three gas units to the left hand elevation of the property.

You do need to check and confirm with the owner exactly where the gas supply comes from.



Gas units

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

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

PLUMBING AND HEATING



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

Water Supply

We were advised by the tenant who was present on the day of the survey that the controlling stopcock is located in the basement.

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

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

Water Pressure

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

Cold Water Cistern

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

Plumbing

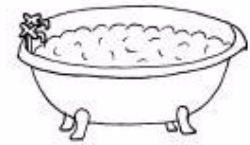
The plumbing, where visible, comprises copper piping. It is perfectly possible in a modern alteration that plastic piping can be used for piping that's hidden. No significant leakage was noted on the surface, although most of the pipework is concealed in floors, walls and ducts.

Heating

The boiler was located in the basement, it is manufactured by Valiant.

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

BATHROOM



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

Bathroom

The property has a three piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in reasonable condition. We would recommend a humidity controlled extract fan is added.

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

MAIN DRAINS



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

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

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

Inspection Chambers / Manholes

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

No Manholes Found

Manholes may have been covered up by shingle to the front of the property however in older properties often there were no manholes. Drainage is a relatively new invention that has been added at a later date usually during the Victorian times.

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

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains. This should be a shared responsibility. This would be something a good property management company would have.

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

Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage

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

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

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

In this age of property it is likely to be into shared drains. These can be a problem during heavy rainfall and peak periods, such as the 9 o'clock rush to work.

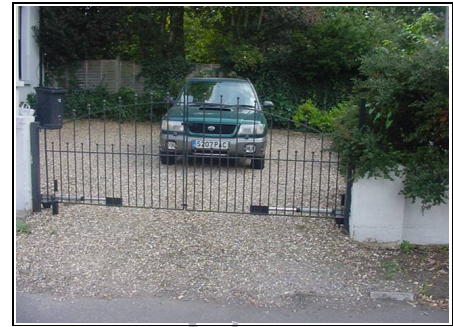
Finally, rain/surface water drains have not been tested and their condition or effectiveness is not known. Similarly, the adequacy of soak-aways has not been established although you are advised that they tend to silt up and become less effective with time.

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

PARKING



There looks to be shared parking at the front. You need to get this confirmed by your legal advisor that this is part of what you are buying.



Parking and front garden

EXTERNAL AREAS

Communal Gardens

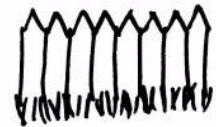
We are unsure if you have access rights to the gardens at the rear. This would be a nice extra thing to have.

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

The boundary wall is not in the best of conditions.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend that this is viewed from both sides. We did call on this neighbour but no one answered the door.

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



Rear garden



Rear boundary wall

Neighbours

Left Hand Neighbours

The adjoining house we called on but no one answered the door

Upstairs neighbours and rear neighbours

We knocked on their doors but no one answered them although we know someone was in on the ground floor flat as we'd seen them earlier.

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POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

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

- a) Responsibility for boundaries.
- b) Rights for you to enter onto the adjacent property to maintain any structure situated near or on the boundary and any similar rights your neighbour may have to enter onto your property.
- c) Obtain any certificates, guarantees or approvals in relation to:
 - i) Cavity wall insulation and cavity wall tie repairs.
- d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.
- e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.
- f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.
- g) Adjoining roads and services.
- h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.
- i) General development proposals in the locality.
- j) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.
- k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or are likely to exist beneath the curtilage of the site upon which the property stands and which could affect the quiet enjoyment, safety or stability of the property, outbuildings or surrounding areas.
- l) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use

and no investigations have been made in this respect.

- m) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) Most Legal advisors will recommend an Envirosearch or a similar product is used by you to establish whether the area falls within a flood plain, old landfill site, radon area etc. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of Envirosearch or similar please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them of it. Any general findings should be brought to their logical conclusion by using appropriate specialist advisers.

However, with regard to Envirosearch or similar general reports please see our article link on the www.1stAssociated.co.uk Home Page.

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

LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES

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

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.

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REFERENCES

The repair and maintenance of houses
Published by Estates Gazette Limited

Life expectancies of building components
*Published by Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and
Building Research Establishment*

Surveying buildings
*By Malcolm Hollis published by Royal Institution of
Chartered Surveyors Books.*

House Builders Bible
By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press

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APPENDICES

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LIMITATIONS

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

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

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

ENGLISH LAW

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

SOLE USE

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

ONLY HUMAN!

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

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

WEATHER

It was a warm autumn 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

NOT LOCAL

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

OCCUPIED PROPERTY

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

INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to us not having access to the adjoining flats /apartments and not having access to the roof. Also our view of the property was limited by the tree and we had little view of the right hand elevation, although we did go next door to view this further.

BUILDING INSURANCE

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

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

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

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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

General Information on Living in Leased/Shared Freehold Properties

Living in Multi Occupied Properties

- As a leasehold/shared freehold 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/shared freeholders to own the freehold of the building through a residents' management company, effectively becoming their own landlord.

- A lease/shared freeholder agreement is a contract between the leaseholder/shared freeholder 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/shared freeholder and the landlord and should spell out what you can expect from the landlord in terms of services.

No two leases/shared freehold agreements 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.

- Your contractual rights laid out in the lease/shared freehold agreement 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/shared freehold 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/shared freehold and must be paid on the due date.

- Service charges are payable by the leaseholder/shared freeholder 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/shared freeholder are all set out in the lease/shared freehold agreement. So do read it very carefully.

All maintenance costs are met by the leaseholders/shared freeholders 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/shared freehold agreements 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/shared freehold agreement 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/shared freeholders.
- Many leases/shared freehold agreements 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/shared freehold agreement will set out the sums involved and when regular maintenance works are due.
- Leaseholders/shared freeholders 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/shared freehold 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/shared freehold agreement, current relevant legislation and codes of practice.

The agent takes instruction from the landlord, not the leaseholders/shared freeholders, but should be constantly aware of the leaseholders'/shared freeholders' wishes and requirements. The agent will receive a fee which is usually paid by leaseholders/shared freeholders 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, tel: 010-797-2607 or go to arma.org.uk, and agree to abide by its own code of practice and that of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, tel: 0870-333-1600 or visit rics.org.uk.

- If there is a problem with management services, the leaseholder's/shared freeholder'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/shared freeholders 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/shared freehold agreement, 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/shared freeholders 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/shared freeholders 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/shared freeholders whose lease/shared freehold agreement 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/shared freeholders 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

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

www.motleyfool.co.uk

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

www.rightmove.co.uk

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

www.zoopla.co.uk

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

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French Drain

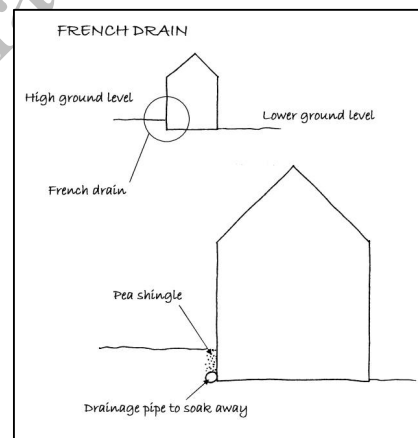
Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

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

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

What use is a French drain?

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



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

French drains must be on a slope

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

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

The French drain system that we would recommend

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

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

The French pond!

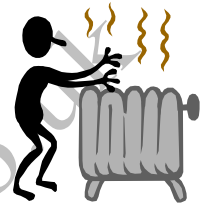
French drains will, over time, clog up, which is why we recommend using a filter fabric. However, even with this they will eventually clog up. Unfortunately, there is no dino-rod equivalent, as it is normally fine sand, organic matter or clay that has clogged up the French drain. So, it is a case of 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.

Condensation and Cold Bridging

What is Cold Bridging?

What is cold bridging and does it always cause condensation?

We often find cold bridging on certain types of property which unfortunately means that condensation is more likely. Cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure allowing coldness to pass through the structure much quicker when warm moist air is present in the property, often caused by things like having a shower or a bath, cooking or washing, particularly if you are drying washing on the radiators. This is also caused by the general climate which results in condensation on the element.



Certain types of buildings are more susceptible to condensation and cold bridging

You often see condensation in properties, for example on a mirror in a bathroom when you have had a shower or a bath. Cold bridging is far worse than condensation as it is caused by an element in the structure which you can do very little to change without great expense.

Typically this will be a lintel. Problems can occur with concrete lintels that were commonly used in the 1970's, and also in more modern, better insulated properties, cold bridging has been known to occur on metal lintels. The problem is what to do about it.

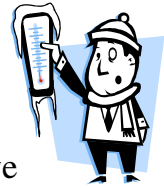


Example of a concrete lintel – can you notice where the cold bridging would be in this photo?



A close up view of the concrete lintel

When is Cold Bridging Most Likely?



In our experience cold bridging is most likely on properties built in the 1930's to 1980's, most commonly in the 1970's. This is the era when we were just starting to think about insulation and we added insulation into our structures for example with cavity wall insulation or double glazed windows. This meant they were warmer which in effect has meant the significance of a lintel over a door or window being colder and allowing the transfer of coldness becomes much more important. This results in condensation that we commonly see above windows in this age and era of property.



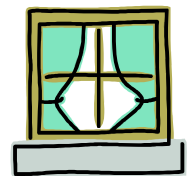
Typical 1970's house



Typical 1970's houses

So what can you do about Cold Bridging?

The difficulty is resolving cold bridging. Normally where condensation is involved if you get the balance of warm and coolness of the air, the air ventilation and movement you can reduce considerably the chances of condensation. Airing the room which seems to have gone out of fashion where you literally open the windows in the morning to air the room is a big step forward.



Where do we most commonly see cold bridging?

We would answer this in two ways. Firstly, we see as mentioned cold bridging is common in 1970's houses. It's also more common to various other factors.



The main other factor is large families or families with young children where there is a lot of washing going on and often during the winter months this washing is then dried on radiators. This is generally known as the lifestyle of the occupants.

Expert witness cases

We have seen some terrible examples of this. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation being caused by cold bridging. The discussions that then take place in court with us as expert witnesses are, is it a design characteristic or is it a lifestyle characteristic that is causing problems.

Is Cold Bridging a design problem?

We have been involved in many reports on condensation and cold bridging and some legal cases where we have been asked to act as expert witness. Really it's down to the design of the property. There are cold elements in it such as a concrete frame or concrete lintels. You have a disadvantage although, not impossible to stop the condensation it's very hard. It could also be argued that where cold bridging is occurring in a modern property you are getting interstitial condensation which is condensation within the structure which you literally can't see.



1960's concrete frame



Concrete lintel visible externally but they are not always visible



Dampness and condensation around the concrete window lintel

Do lifestyle issues cause condensation?

By lifestyle issues we mean the way the building is being used. We have come across quite a few instances where it is how the property is being used that's causing the problems. This may be due to showers being taken without extractor fans being put on or it may be due to clothes being dried internally, particularly during the winter months. It could be steamy kitchens. Some things can be helped by airing the home by opening the windows and in bathrooms and kitchens you can have extractor fans that are controlled by humidity controls on the fans. So it really is an individual answer in most cases to the problems with the property.



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