

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

London Borough of Richmond



FOR

Mr & Mrs XXXX

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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REPORT FORMAT

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

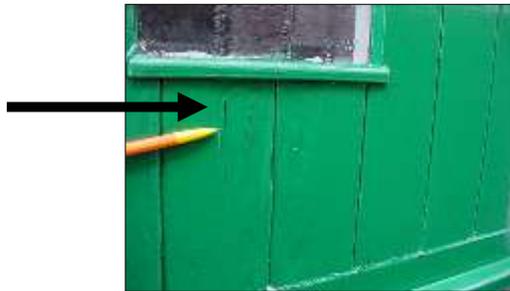
GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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

TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED

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

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS



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

ORIENTATION

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

ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

This is a second floor apartment set within a two storey purpose built apartment building with shops on the ground level. Access is via a communal staircase and partly covered walkway areas. To the rear of the property there is a communal (assumed) grassed area. The property was lived in but no-one was present at the time we carried out the survey.

Typically properties such as this are leasehold or 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.

Typically this type of development was built during the war years up to about the 1950's. If the age of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

Putting Life into Perspective!

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

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1930 | Amy Johnson flies 11,000 miles solo from England to Australia |
| 1931 | Abbey Road recording studios opened by Edward Elgar |
| 1931 | Whipsnade Zoo opens in Bedfordshire |
| 1935 | Cats Eyes first used on British roads |
| 1936 | Edward VIII abdicates and George VI takes over the throne |
| 1939-1945 | World War II (6 June 1944 D-Day) |

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EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front view of whole property



Rear view of whole property



Close up of apartment



Front entrance to apartment



View from apartment to right hand side



Grassed area to rear of property

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ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

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

Apartment

The accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance hallway
- 2) Lounge front left
- 3) Bedroom front right
- 4) Bedroom rear right
- 5) Kitchen rear left
- 6) Bathroom rear middle

Communal Areas

The communal areas consist of:

- 1) Entrance door
- 2) Hallway
- 3) Stairway/walkways (partly covered)
- 4) Grassed area to the rear

Outside Areas

There is a grassed area to the rear which we assume is communal, albeit that the shops back onto it and assume use it.

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INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

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

Second floor apartment



Lounge



Lounge



Bedroom front right



Bedroom rear right



Kitchen



Bathroom

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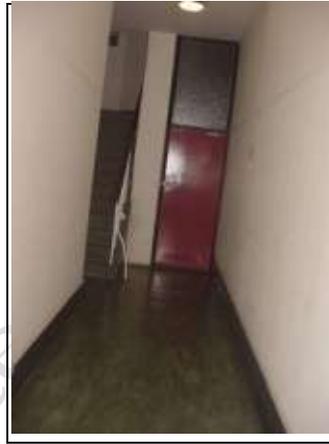
Communal Areas



Entrance door



Internal view of entrance door



Shared corridor



Hallway/stairs



Walkway

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SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

External

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Chimneys: | Brick chimney |
| Main Roof: | Pitched, clad with concrete tiles, with parapet walls around the bay windows. |
| Main Roof Structure: | Not accessible |
| Gutters and Downpipes: | Cast iron / Plastic |
| Soil and Vent Pipe: | Cast iron |
| Walls: | Flemish Bond / Stretcher Bond with cement repointing (assumed) |
| Fascias and Soffits: | Plastic |
| Windows and Doors: | Plastic double glazed windows (only trickle vent is in kitchen) |

Internal

| | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Ceilings: | Plaster onto concrete (assumed) |
| Walls: | Predominantly solid (assumed) |
| Floors: | Concrete (assumed) |

Services

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The boiler is Vaillant and is located in the kitchen. The electrics are 1960's and require upgrading.

The above terms are explained in full in the main body of the Report.
We have used the term 'assumed' as we have not opened up the structure.

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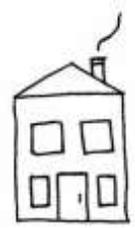
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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

It is inevitable with a report on a building of this nature that some of the issues we have focussed in on you may dismiss as irrelevant and some of the areas that we have decided are part of the 'character' of this property you may think are very important. We have taken in the region of 150 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/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.

Once you have read the report we would recommend that you revisit the property to review your thoughts on the building in light of the comments we have made in this survey.

The Good

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

- 1.0) The property is relatively spacious particularly compared with new properties.
- 2.0) The apartment has been decorated although you do need to appreciate this is superficial.
- 3.0) Grassed area to the rear which we assume is communal, albeit that the shops back onto it.

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

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The Bad

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

1.0) Condensation

We can see that the property has and does get condensation. We can see this on the windows to the front of the property. The reason why condensation is occurring is because the warm humid air within the property is condensing on the colder areas such as the windows.



Condensation on inside of double glazing



Condensation



Mould on mastic



Close up of mould on mastic

ACTION REQUIRED: This means that you will have to constantly clean the windows to stop the mould and also it will potentially grow in areas such as cupboards or colder rooms. You need to appreciate that this condensation and mould is very difficult to remove from this type of construction of property. You can improve things by adding large humidity controlled extract fans to the bathroom and the kitchen and any other areas you intend to dry clothes such as the rear bedroom.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £500 - £1,500 depending upon how difficult the electrics are for the extract fans. Remember you also may have to have approval from the freeholders. Please obtain quotations.

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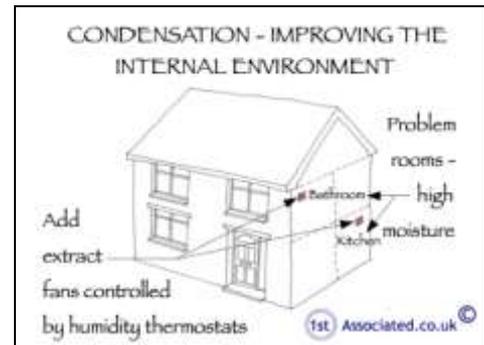
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1.1) Condensation is a design problem – cold bridging/thermal bridging

The property needs to have good quality large humidity controlled extract fans added to the kitchen, bathroom and any other areas where clothes are dried. This will draw any humid air out of the main humidity creating areas. However you still may have condensation problems and mould problems due to the design of the building which has what is known as cold bridging. This means elements within it are colder than other elements and they attract condensation.



Condensation

1.2) How the lives of others in the building may affect you

We have come across problems with this type of construction where the lifestyle of occupiers around you can affect your property, for example if the flat below (we knocked on the door but there was no answer) carries out a lot of steam cooking for example or showers very regularly without opening the windows then humid air will soak into their ceiling which is your floor. This floor is concrete and for want of a better term it acts as blotting paper which can then cause problems within your property.

We need to emphasise the difficulty of resolving problems within your property on your own. In our experience there needs to be a joint improvement to all the apartments adding insulation and such things as humidity controlled extract fans before this type of problem can be resolved properly. You can improve your apartment but you may not be able to resolve the problems.

We mentioned the dampness that can come through the concrete floor. We want to emphasise that the worst we have seen of this is a mould growing in the carpet, however in the majority of cases an underlayer and carpet resolves the problem, however we cannot guarantee this.

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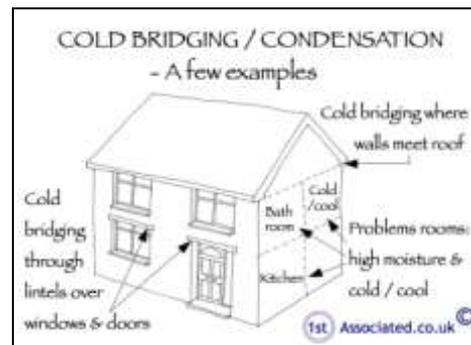
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2.0 Thermal /cold bridging

When these properties were originally designed and built there was little thought given to energy efficiency, certainly not cold bridging. We now tend to live in our properties at far warmer temperatures than we did years ago and also we shower a lot more and it is probably true to say that we steam and microwave cook a lot more as well as drying our clothes within the buildings, all of which add humidity into the air. Without an effective system of air circulation and moist air removal the property finds it hard to cope with all this moisture and it results in condensation.



Cold Bridging

Cold bridging defined

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.

ACTION REQUIRED: You have to consider thermal/cold bridging as a characteristic of the property and accept that it may be an unsolvable problem. We would emphasise that the problem is only really noticeable during the winter/wetter months.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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3.0) Lack of air movement in the property

We can see in the property there are various things that mean there is a lack of air movement in the property which in turn means you are more susceptible to condensation. We would list these things as:

3.1) Lack of trickle vents to some of the double glazed windows

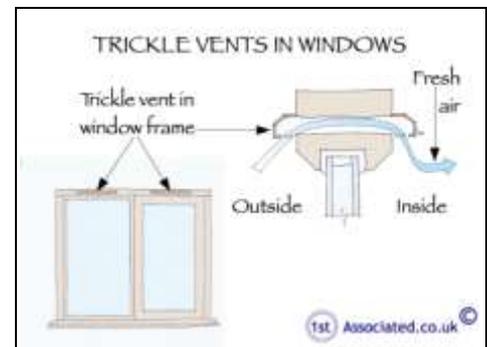
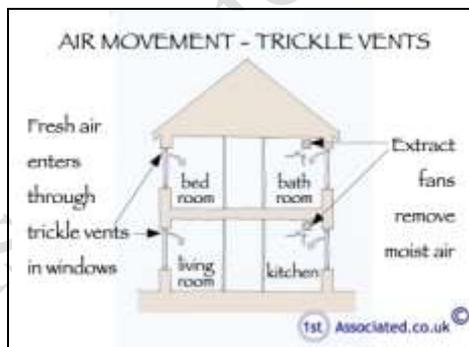
Whilst we are mentioning double glazed windows, we would also comment that part of the problem with lack of air movement is how airtight and how air sealed modern double glazed windows are.



Trickle vent to kitchen window



No trickle vent to bedroom window



Trickle vents

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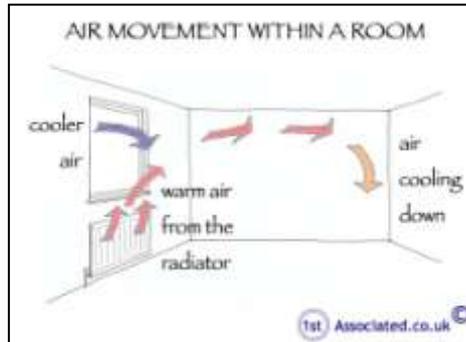
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3.2) Radiators location and type

Not all the radiators are under windows which is where they create the best air movement. We also note that some are single panel.



Internal radiator

Internal Radiators defined

Radiators located underneath windows help air flow in a property as warm air rises and hits the cooler air above the windows it then circulates around the room and helps the air circulation in the property as a whole.

ACTION REQUIRED: You can get trickle vents added. The problem is as you are second floor level, at the front of the property they may have to have scaffold outside of the property to gain access. From the pedestrian area this does look like it could be carried out from a tower scaffold however these nevertheless add cost to the work.



Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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4.0) Polystyrene ceiling tiles to the bathroom

Generally these are not recommended anymore particularly in a fire situation (as they drop the molten plastic onto you). Many mortgage companies do not like these. We would suggest the polystyrene tiles are removed. Unfortunately if they are removed then it may damage the ceiling so you do need to allow for repairs to the ceiling.



Polystyrene ceiling tiles

ACTION REQUIRED: Remove tiles, repair ceiling and redecorate.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £200 - £400; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Internal walls Section of this Report.

5.0) Fire alarm system

With this number of apartments we would expect a proper fire alarm system that is interlinked which identifies where the problem is and then you can identify which of the stairways to escape from in a worst case scenario of a fire.



Battery operated fire alarm

ACTION REQUIRED: This is the sort of thing that needs to be put in a planned maintenance programme/sinking fund; you cannot do this on your own.

ANTICIPATED COST: To improve the fire alarm system via a hard wired fire alarm system (this is something you could do when you upgrade your electrics), we would expect costs in the region of £250 - £750; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Other Matters Section of this Report.

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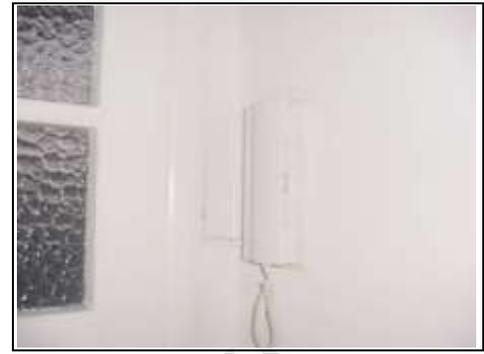
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6.0) Intercom system/your security

The property would benefit from a video entry system as you literally cannot see anyone at the front door.

ACTION REQUIRED: This again, is the sort of thing that needs to go in a planned maintenance/sinking fund as a general improvement to everyone; you cannot do this on your own.



Phone entry system

7.0) Noise

7.1) Noise transfer

We knocked on several neighbours doors without response. We were going to ask them about noise transfer. This is where noise is transferred through the structure, also known as structure borne noise. We spoke to the cafe on the ground floor who advised that they couldn't hear anything from the apartments above but then they were quite a noisy operation. It is normal for the problem to be the other way around, i.e. people in private living accommodation complaining about the shop's noise!

7.2) Flight path

A number of planes went over during the course of the survey.



Flight path

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8.0) Planned maintenance/sinking fund

In a property of this size there should be a planned maintenance schedule and a sinking fund. Planned maintenance is a spreadsheet of work that is required over the next ten years. This often incorporates such large things as roof repairs where possibly scaffolding is needed and other things that are shared such as the drains or even the video door entry system that we have mentioned. This is then funded via payments into what is termed as a sinking fund for building work.



Paint flaking in communal areas

ACTION REQUIRED: Your legal advisor to check and confirm there is a planned maintenance schedule and also there is a sinking fund in place.

9.0) Services

9.1) Dated electrics

The electric fuse board looks to be from the 1960's. We would recommend this is upgraded.

ACTION REQUIRED: Replace.

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



Dated electrics

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10.0) 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.

The Ugly

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

We have found more than the average number of things that we would classify as bad for the age, type and style of property. We would specifically comment upon the cold bridging and the associated condensation and mould. There are enough other things within the bad section to make this a high risk purchase and you need to think very carefully about it and receive a substantial discount in the purchase price.

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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.

Planned Maintenance/Sinking Fund - Future Work

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

The property would benefit from redecoration although not as bad as we have seen; in some instances we would classify them as below average condition.

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.

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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.

Services

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection only of the services within the property and we would always recommend you have your own specific testing for each of the services. We also need to advise you of the following:

Electrics

The fuse board is dated, we would recommend replacement. The Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) recommend a test and report whenever a property changes occupancy. This should be carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

Heating

Improvements could be made to the heating; please see our comments in the Executive Summary. 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

In a property of this size there should be a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains available and your management company should be aware of the condition of the drains. Whilst we ran the tap for 15 minutes without any build up or blockages the only way to be 100% certain of the condition of the drains is to have a closed circuit TV camera report.

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Water Supply

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

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

DIY/Handyman Type Work

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. We would add that we believe a substantial discount on the true market value should be obtained to accommodate the various repairs and issues in the property.

Every Business Transaction has a Risk

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

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Estimates of Building Costs

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £125 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

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

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SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION



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

Having met you and we are aware that you are about to start a family, you need to be particularly aware of the problems of cold / thermal bridging and the associated condensation that occurs in this era of property. We would recommend that you meet the present owners and ask them about living in the property and ask them specifically about the condensation as well as carrying out all the other recommendations. We would refer you to our comments in the Executive Summary, 'Good', 'Bad' and 'Ugly' Section and ask that you re-read these.

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

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

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MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT

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

TENURE – 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 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.

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



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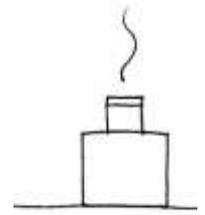
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EXTERNAL

CHIMNEY STACKS, FLUES AND PARAPET WALLS



Chimney Stacks

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

There are numerous chimneys to this property as a whole. We believe you have got one chimney to the left hand side which sits on a party wall (all directions given as you face the front of the property).

Chimney One – located to the left hand side of your property

This is possibly not your chimney as it was difficult to identify which chimney was to which property. This chimney is brick finished with four chimney pots. From what we could see from ground level it looked in average condition considering its age, type and style.



Chimney one

Unfortunately we were unable to see the flaunching or the flashings, we therefore cannot comment upon them.

ACTION REQUIRED: Repair work to the chimney is typical of the sort of thing that a property management company should have in hand as part of the planned maintenance. Your legal advisor should request information on this.



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.

Flues

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

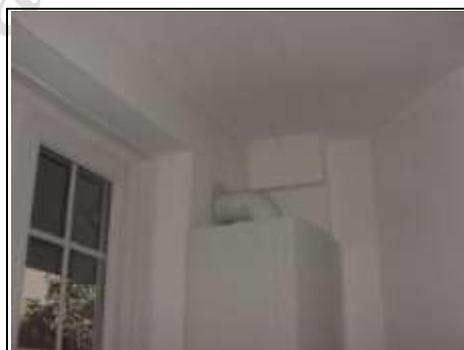
The property has a number of flues. There is a soil and vent pipe flue at roof level, a flue for the boiler to the rear of the property and also we have taken a photo of the flue from the cafe below as the noise from this may disturb you during the summer months particularly if you want to have doors open, etc.



Soil and vent pipe flue



Flue from boiler externally



Flue from boiler internally within kitchen



Flue from cafe at bottom

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Parapet Walls

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

We can see various features to the roof such as the parapet wall around the bay window. These typically have a box gutter detail which can be problematic if not cleaned. From our view at ground level it doesn't look to be that easy to clean this parapet wall and you will of course have any costs that are incurred in relation to it being repaired.



Parapet wall

Party Wall

The party wall act relates to shared items, such as your walls and floors. If you do any work on these you will need to deal with the Party Wall Act. Here is a brief explanation of it.

Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

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

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

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

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

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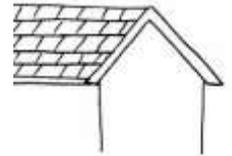
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ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



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

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

Main Roof

The main roof is pitched and clad with, we believe, a concrete tile although it is difficult to view and therefore we cannot comment upon its condition.

ACTION REQUIRED: Again this is the sort of thing that should be covered with a planned maintenance schedule via your property management company. We would normally comment but unfortunately we just didn't feel that we had a good enough view.



Front of main roof



Rear of main roof

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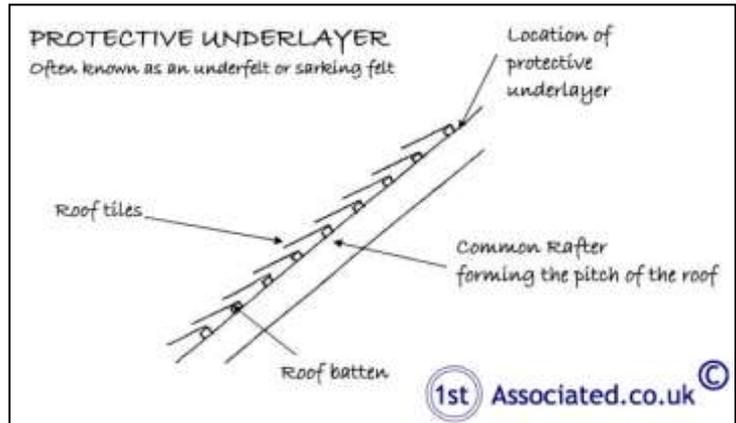
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Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)

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 were unable to inspect the roof space and therefore are unable to comment upon it.

Walkway/high level roof

We noted that your walkway is also the roof to the area below. We were pleased to see that this appears to be in good condition around the area of your property. Please note you will probably have a shared cost of this for the entirety of the block.



Asphalt to walkway

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

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

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

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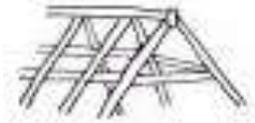
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ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT



(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)

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

Main Roof

Roof Access

The access to the roof was locked.



Access to roof locked

Roof Structure

Taking an educated guess we would expect a roof of this type to be either a hand cut timber frame roof or a metal trussed roof. Unfortunately as we haven't had access we cannot comment on it.

Ventilation

We could see no obvious signs of ventilation to the roof.

Insulation

You need to check if there is any insulation within the roof as this will affect your heating bills considerably as you are directly below the roof. Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

Finally, we would reiterate that we haven't had access to the roof structure.

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GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

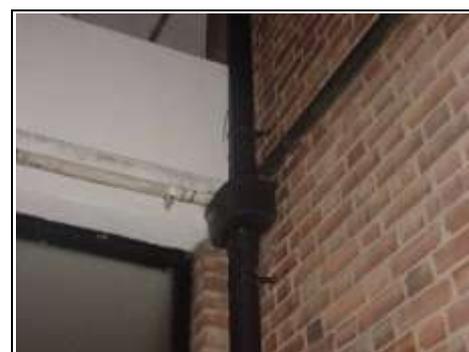
Gutters and Downpipes

The gutters and downpipes are a mixture of cast iron and plastic. We didn't see any obvious signs of leaks but there may be some minor leaks that most people would be happy to live with. We assume that maintenance to the guttering and downpipes is carried out via the property management company.



Gutter and downpipe

ACTION REQUIRED: We would always recommend you stand outside the property next time it rains heavily and see how well the drains cope with the rainwater particularly looking at the guttering and the joints. We would also recommend if there are any problems then contact your property management company.



Plastic gutters and downpipes

Soil and Vent Pipe

The property has cast iron soil and vent pipes, however it looks to be plastic at roof level.



Soil and vent pipe 34

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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 property looks to have a Stretcher bond brickwork to the front and Flemish bond brickwork to the rear.

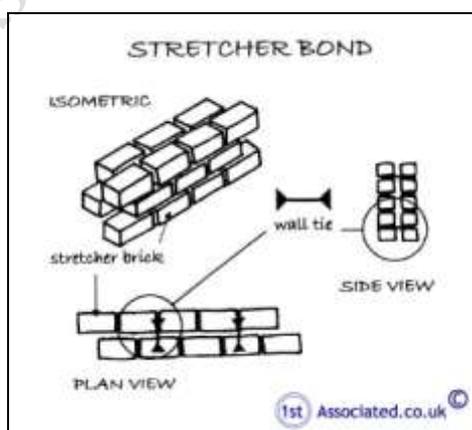
Structural Frame

We believe that this property has a concrete structural frame although we cannot be certain without opening it up. This means that you have concrete floors and ceilings and also staircases and a structure to hold them all in place; this is part of the reason why you are getting cold/thermal bridging problems.

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

Brickwork

We believe that the brickwork to the front of the property is likely to be a cladding around a structural frame. To the rear of the property we believe it is likely to be a traditional Flemish bond brick wall which are solid walls which may be liable to penetrating dampness internally depending upon the condition of the brickwork and the exposure to the weather. It is essential that external faces be kept in good condition. In this case the pointing looks in reasonable condition to both the front and rear of the property.



Stretcher bond brickwork to front

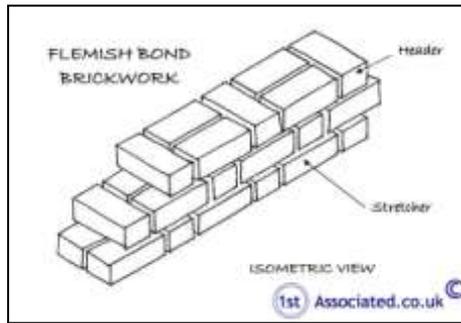
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Flemish bond brickwork to rear wall of apartment

Render

There is render/concrete to the walkway areas which looked in average condition however please be aware that we could only look at this in a superficial manner.



Render

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

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

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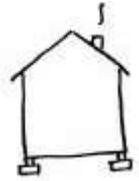
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FOUNDATIONS



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

We would expect to find a concrete foundation typically known as a 'strip concrete' foundation which is likely to go down a few meters.

London Clay

As with most properties in the London area, this property stands on London Clay. It is therefore more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in London properties.

Building Insurance Policy

In Leasehold/Shared Freehold properties the property is usually insured by the Landlord and recharged back to the Leaseholder/Shared Freeholder. It is a condition of the Lease/Shared Freehold Agreement that insurance is taken with the Landlord. As we have not seen a copy of the Lease/Shared Freehold Agreement we can only assume that this Lease/Shared Freehold Agreement carries the usual convention.

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.

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.

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

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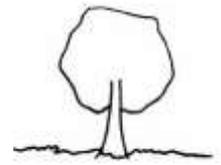
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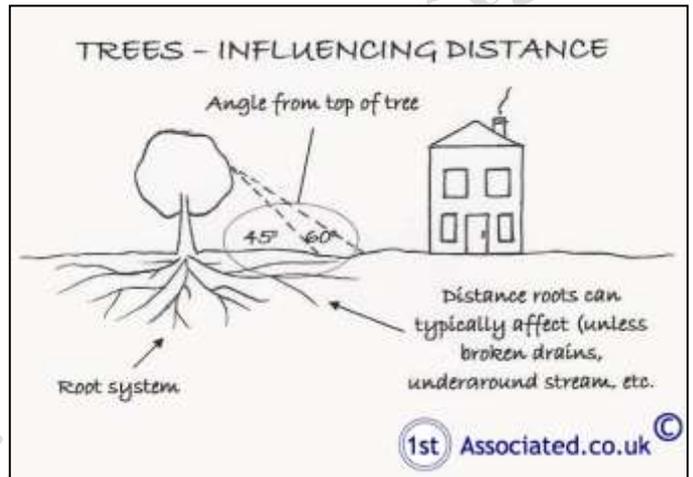
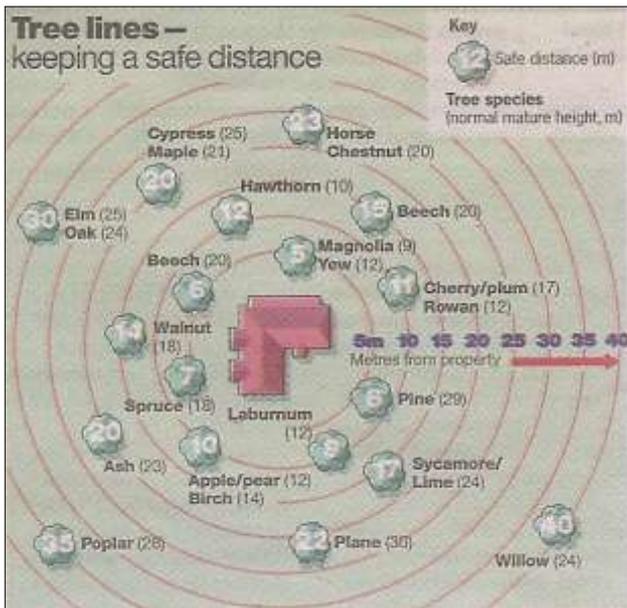
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TREES



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

There are no trees within what insurance companies would term as influencing distance of the 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.

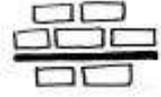
Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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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 couldn't see a damp proof course but as you are in a second floor property and rising damp typically rises to a meter this shouldn't affect you.

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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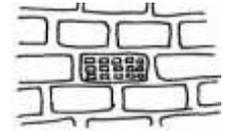
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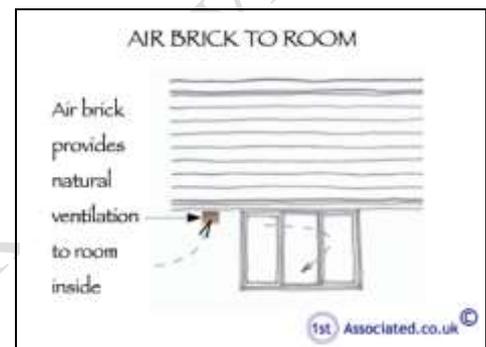
AIRBRICKS



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.

High Level Air Bricks

We noted that some properties had high level airbricks which may be a help in reducing condensation levels. Air bricks are essential to have a throughflow of air as this helps to reduce the chances of condensation. We believe that in the 1960's this was a requirement in many buildings.



High level air brick



Air brick internally at high level

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

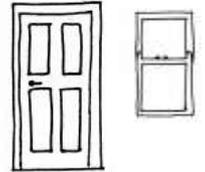
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EXTERNAL JOINERY

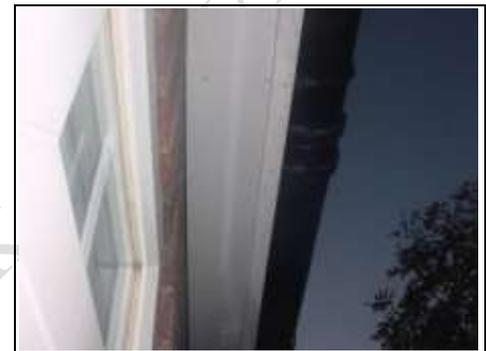


The external joinery part of this section covers windows and doors, and any detailing to the external face of the walls.

Windows primary functions are to admit light and air, but they also have thermal and sound properties. The doors allow access and egress within the property.

Fascias and Soffits

The fascias and soffits are plastic; they look to be clad over the original timber. Unfortunately without literally taking them off we cannot confirm this. We do find there can be problems where plastic is put over the original timber as it tends to help it to rot.



Plastic fascia

ACTION REQUIRED: Check with your property management company as to whether these are true plastic fascias and soffits or if they are covering over the original timber ones. We would also add that it would be prudent to have a vent to the fascias and soffits to vent the roof.

Windows and Doors

The property has plastic double glazed windows with a trickle vent to the kitchen window and without trickle vents to the rest of the windows.

The windows generally look to be of an average quality with the exception of not having trickle vents!



Trickle vent to kitchen window

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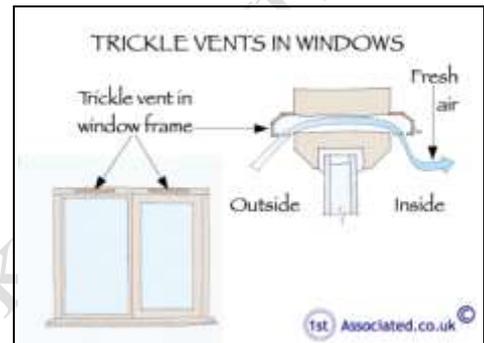
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We would draw your attention to the fact that sealed double glazed units can fail, particularly as a result of poor workmanship during installation. Failure of the seal leads to condensation between the two panes of glass and simply replacing the affected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

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.

Trickle Vents Defined

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



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

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EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

There appears to be relatively small amounts of external decorations. You will have a share of the external decorations of the property. We note that although you have plastic windows, many other apartments have the older style metal windows which need painting. There are also some other areas that need painting such as the render/concrete to the walkways which you will have a shared cost of.



Painting required to balcony wall and balcony ceilings

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

Please see our comments in the External Joinery section.

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INTERNAL



CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

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

Ceilings

From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction we believe that the ceilings are likely to be plaster onto a concrete finish.

This type of finish is relatively common in this era of developments. Unfortunately it has led to cold bridging and it also doesn't help with regard to noise transfer as the noise is transferred through the concrete and plaster ceiling.

We discussed why some leases required carpet within them yet some had parquet flooring; we would say that the original leases with the parquet flooring were before the problems were understood and later leases have a requirement for carpet to deaden the noise transfer.

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

Internal Walls and Partitions

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

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Perimeter Walls

These were solid and very smooth when tapped and are likely to have had a skim coat of gypsum plaster or possibly a render as we have found this within some of this type of property.

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

This comment has been based on the visual look of the wall which is relatively “smooth” and normally means a modern finish. In fact we would add that there may have been a gypsum skim coat of plaster to smooth out the walls. As you are aware the decoration standard within the property is top end of what we typically see in this age, type and style of property.

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

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

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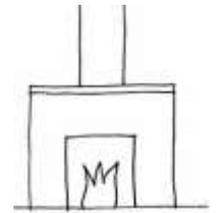
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CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES



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

The chimney breasts are located to the left hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property). This chimney is blocked up with a vent which we were pleased to see. It is very unlikely that you would be able to open up and use the fire. If you could, ironically the air circulation may well help the condensation levels within the property.



Airbrick in chimney

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

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

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

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FLOORS



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

Floors

The floors felt solid and firm underfoot so we have assumed they are formed in concrete. The concrete floors are very much like the concrete ceilings (in fact they are the concrete ceilings for you and your downstairs neighbour) and may suffer from the same problems as mentioned of cold bridging and noise transfer. Again we would refer you to our comments on carpeting of these.



Concrete stairs and floors

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

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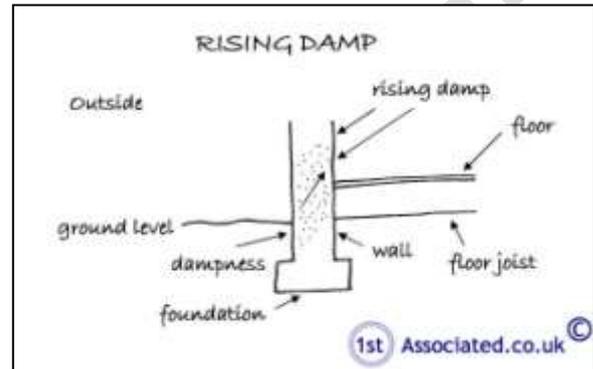
DAMPNESS



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

Rising Damp

Rising damp depends upon various components including the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation of the material, amongst other things. Rising damp can come from the ground, drawn by capillary action, to varying degrees of intensity and height into the materials above. There is a strong argument that true rising damp very rarely is found.

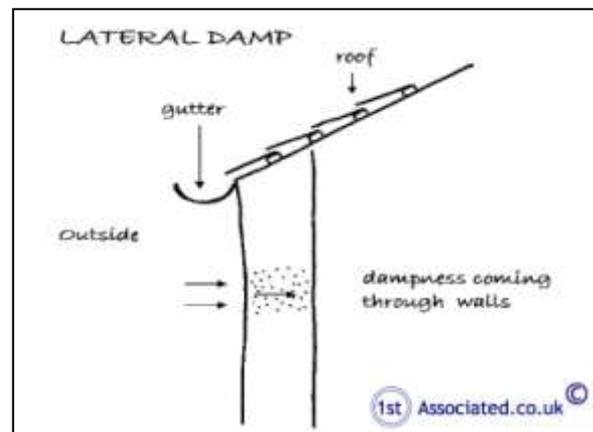


As this property is on the second floor rising damp normally does not affect it as rising damp travels to about a metre high from ground level. However you may have a shared responsibility for dampness in the property.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your legal adviser needs to specifically check and confirm with regard to liability.

Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

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



We used a damp meter on the external walls. We have found dampness in line with what we typically see for this age, type and style of property. We were pleased to find that we were not getting excessive amounts of dampness readings around the windows which we sometimes find we do.



Testing for lateral dampness

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

Condensation

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

Condensation is a major problem in this property. At the time of the inspection there were signs of condensation to the windows.

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

We would add that condensation depends upon how you utilise the building known as occupiers lifestyle. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating, cooling and ventilation of properties and opening windows to air the property regularly.

Extract fans in kitchens, bathrooms and drying areas

A way of helping to reduce condensation is to have good large extract fans with humidity controlled thermostats within the kitchens and bathrooms which are moisture generating areas.

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

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

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 panel doors.



Door

Staircase

The staircases that we did see were concrete. There are several alternatives in case of fire.

Kitchen

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

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

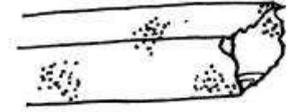
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TIMBER DEFECTS



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 would advise that we have not been able to view the areas that we would typically find timber defects in such as the roof therefore are unable to comment.

Wet Rot

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

Again, we would make similar comments to the Dry Rot; we have not been able to view the roof of the main areas we would expect to find wet rot. We would however comment that the fascias and soffits overlaid in plastic may well be covering up wet rot.

Woodworm



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

The roof is the main area that we look for woodworm. In this instance we were unable to inspect the roof.

Finally, we would reiterate that we have been unable to access the roof.

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INTERNAL DECORATIONS



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

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

Communal Decorations

We would add that communal decorations look to be old and dated and in need of redecoration.

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

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THERMAL EFFICIENCY



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

HIPs

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

Roofs

We were unable to inspect the roof space and therefore are unable to comment. The roofs do need to be insulated in this type of property; often we find that they are not.

Walls

We are not certain of the construction. We would expect in this era of property a solid wall, however there looks to be a cavity wall to the front of the property and a solid wall to the rear of the property. We would need to carry out further investigations such as opening up the walls to confirm this.

Windows

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

Services

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

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Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is below average (due to the construction characteristics of the property) / average compared with what we typically see.

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

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

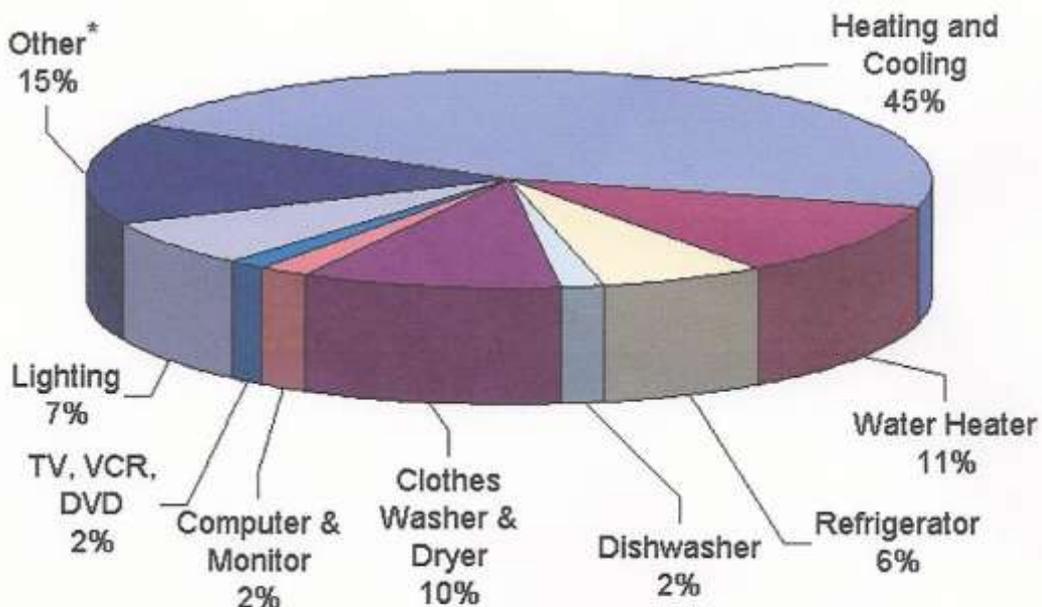
or alternatively www.cat.org.uk

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

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

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

What does my energy bill pay for?



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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

We noted a battery operated smoke alarm.

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



Battery operated alarm

Multi-occupied Property – Fire Alarms

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 confirm whether this is the case.

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We would recommend, for your own safety, that smoke detectors be installed. We would always recommend a hard wired fire alarm system and are also aware that some now work from a wireless signal which may be worth investigating. Whilst fire is relatively rare it is in a worst case scenario obviously devastating.

Insurance

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.

We would always recommend staying with the existing insurance company, and then if there are any problems you should not have the difficulty of negotiating with two insurance companies passing the blame between each other.

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

Asbestos

In a property of this age there may well be some asbestos.

In this case we have not noted asbestos however there may be asbestos in the property as a whole. Asbestos was commonly used post war until it was banned only in the last ten or so years, although it is rumoured that it was still used after this point in time.

Our insurance company requires us to advise that we are not asbestos surveyors.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your legal advisor to check with the property management company if there is an asbestos register.

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SERVICES

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

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

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ELECTRICITY



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

Fuseboard

The electric fuses and consumer units were located in the cupboard off the hallway. The fuse board are 1960's and dated; better are now available. In multi occupied properties a defective fuse board can be particularly dangerous.



Dated 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 Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test and report should be carried

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out by a NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.

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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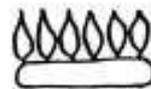
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GAS



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

We believe that the property has mains gas due to the boiler system. We noted that some properties had the gas units outside; we assume the gas unit was inside however many of the cupboards were packed full with stored items so we didn't physically see it.

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

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

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PLUMBING AND HEATING



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

Water Supply

The controlling stopcock was not located. Again, we would comment that the cupboards were packed full. Often it is underneath the kitchen sink.

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 did not!).

Heating

The boiler was located in the kitchen, it is manufactured by Vaillant.

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.



Vaillant boiler

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Ten Minute Heating Test

The heating was on at the time of the inspection and the property was warm.

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

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

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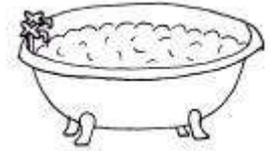
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BATHROOM



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

Bathroom

The property has a three piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in average condition. We believe the bathroom will be subject to condensation due to the lack of ventilation in it.



Bathroom

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regards to the polystyrene ceiling tiles and adding extract fans.



Polystyrene ceiling tiles

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

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MAIN DRAINS



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

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

The cold taps have been run for approximately quarter of an hour in the 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.

With a multi-occupied property it is very difficult to establish which inspection chambers / manholes relate to which property. We can carry out a die test; however we have run the taps in this instance for quarter of an hour, as noted above, with no build up or back up, so we did not feel that it was required. Please note our comments that the property management company should have information on this.

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.

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Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage

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

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

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

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

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

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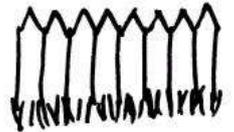
OUTSIDE AREAS

PARKING



Parking is usually roadside parking on a first come first serve basis. There may be parking permits.

COMMUNAL AREAS



Communal Gardens

There is a grassed area to the rear which we assume is communal, albeit that the shops back onto it.



Grassed area

Communal corridor

Ideally the corridor should be kept clear as it is also a fire exit.



Prams in shared corridor

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Communal walkway



Concrete walkways are asphalt covered

Boundaries:

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

Neighbours

Left Hand Neighbours

We knocked at the time of the inspection but there was no response.

Right Hand Neighbours

We knocked at the time of the inspection but there was no response.

Downstairs Neighbours

We knocked at the time of the inspection but there was no response.

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POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

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

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

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- h) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.
- i) 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.
- j) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use and no investigations have been made in this respect.
- k) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- l) 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.

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

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LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES

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

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

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

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

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REFERENCES

The repair and maintenance of houses
Published by Estates Gazette Limited

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

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

House Builders Bible
By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press

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LIMITATIONS

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

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

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

ENGLISH LAW

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

SOLE USE

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

ONLY HUMAN!

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

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

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WEATHER

It was a dry winter's day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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

NOT LOCAL

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

OCCUPIED PROPERTY

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

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INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited as:

- 1) We were unable to view the roof
- 2) Due to the amount of stored items
- 3) As the property was empty we did not have the benefit of talking to the owners or them answering our usual question and answers.



Stored items

We thank you for meeting up with us and apologise for missing the meeting the first time.

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.

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APPENDICES

1. General Information on Living in Leasehold/Shared Freehold Properties.
2. The Electrical Regulations – Part P of the Building Regulations
3. Information on the Property Market
4. Condensation and Cold Bridging Article

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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.

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- 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.

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- 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

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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.

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THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

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

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

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

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - NICEIC Electrical Contractor or equivalent trades body.
2. certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.
3. 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 do's and don'ts.

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Work You Cannot do Yourself

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

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INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

www.landreg.org.uk

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.

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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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Condensation and Cold Bridging

What is Cold Bridging?

What is cold bridging and how does it work?

Cold bridging is a term and a problem we feel will become much more common in years to come. We are finding more and more examples of Cold Bridging. This happens in certain types of property and to some extent it could be argued that it is a characteristic of that type of property and quite a complex issue to resolve. Unfortunately it means condensation is more likely.



Post war / 1950's property that cold bridging can be a problem in.

Cold Bridging

Cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure or fabric of the building allowing coldness to pass through. When warm moist air is present in the property and it passes through the colder elements of the structure we have what is known as Cold Bridging. This is often caused by a combination of issues. It can occur from things such as having a shower or a bath, cooking or clothes washing, particularly if you are drying washing on the radiators. It could, in commercial properties, be a large gathering of people breathing (this can cause a lot of humidity) in a building that has stood cold and empty for some time such as a church, village hall, sports centre or a crèche. These human atmospheres create a climate which can result in condensation on the cold elements of the structure and fabric if the room is not ventilated properly.

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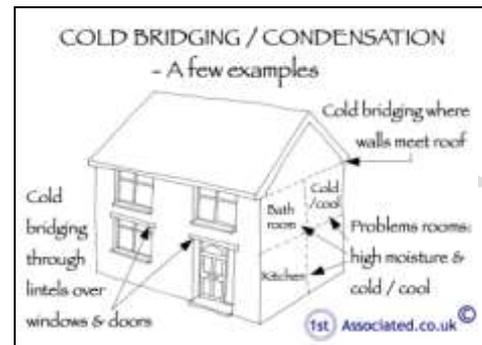
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Certain types of buildings are more susceptible to Condensation and Cold Bridging

Here is our sketch on Cold Bridging

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



Cold Bridging isn't just about condensation on mirrors

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

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



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

To give you some examples of Cold Bridging

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

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



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

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

Commercial properties suffer from Cold Bridging too

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



Cold Bridging in a commercial property with a concrete frame.

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When is Cold Bridging Likely?

In our experience we have seen cold bridging occurring in

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

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

Problems with 1970/1980 era properties relating to Cold Bridging

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

The 1970's is an era where we had just begun to think about insulating due to the oil crisis and where we added insulation into our structures



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



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



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

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For example with:

1. cavity wall insulation or
2. double glazed windows.

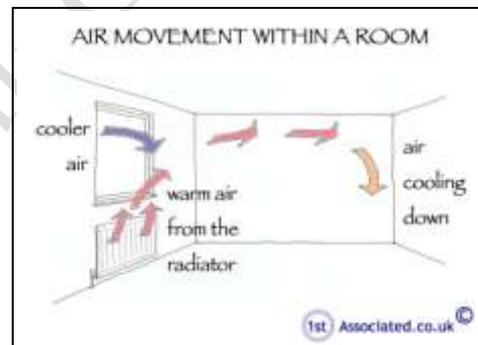
This meant they were warmer which has meant the significance of a lintel, over a door or window, being colder and allowing the transfer of coldness becomes much more important. This results in condensation that we commonly see above windows in this age and era of property.



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

How to solve Cold Bridging

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



Where do we most commonly find Cold Bridging?

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



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

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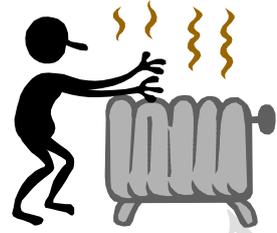
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Is your life style a factor in Cold Bridging?

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



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

Expert witness case, what is an expert witness?

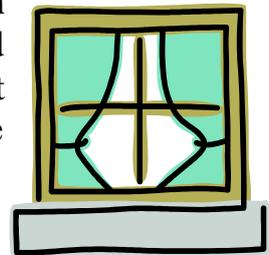
This is where you employ someone who is a specialist within a field, such as us as Chartered Building Surveyors, who comment on problems of condensation within the property. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation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



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

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

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



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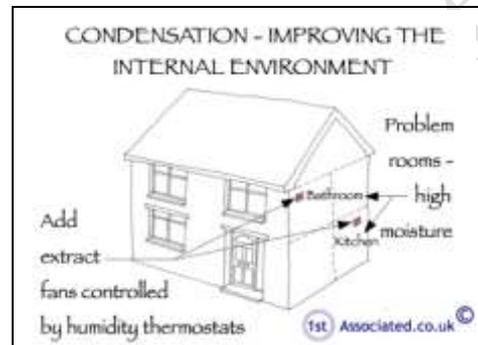
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they are causing. For example, drying lots of washing on a radiator inside may be causing excessive moisture in the atmosphere. Equally not opening the windows and closing or sealing up vents can be a problem.

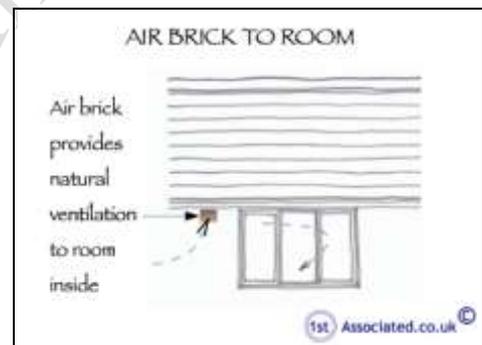
Design of the Building

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



Things to remember about an air brick

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



Air brick may not ventilate room enough

What's happening in brand new housing?

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



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

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

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



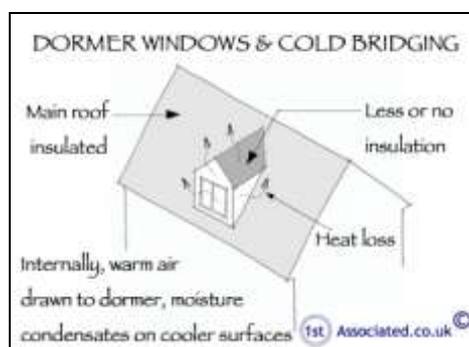
Sliding sash windows can swell in the winter months

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

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

Extensions and Cold Bridging

Increasingly we are coming across problems where properties have been extended and it has not been planned or thought through properly. We have come across dormer roofs that simply have no insulation so any heat in the property is going straight out of the dormer roof. We have also come across property problems where an extension has resulted in colder areas within the property



and which although not problem areas, as such, our clients have found them not nice areas to be in. It is not a great outcome if you have just spent tens of thousands of pounds on a new extension that you are not happy with.

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