RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

Weston Super Mare,
Somerset BS23

FOR

Mrs B

Prepared by:

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:
www.1stAssociated.co.uk
0800 298 5424

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, may we thank you for using our services once again and your kind instruction; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property.

As you may recall 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.

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

As always we recommend that you set aside time to read the report in full, consider the comments, make notes of any areas that 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 house is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

REPORT FORMAT

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

GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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

TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED

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

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

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

ORIENTATION

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

ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

This is a two storey detached property which sits on a sloping site. It has gardens to the front, part of which has been set aside for parking and there is also a garage on the left hand side. The property has gardens to the side, with the rear garden being landscaped.

The owners advised us that the think that the property was built in the 1980's although we think it could possibly have been built slightly earlier.

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:

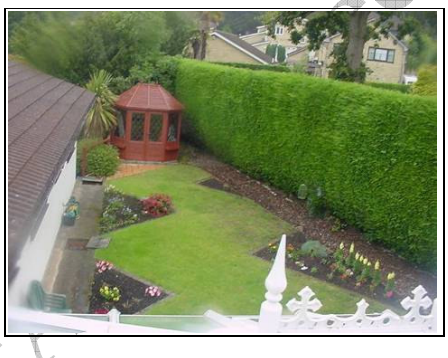
1978	First test tube baby born
1978-1979	The Winter of Discontent
1979-1991	The Thatcher Years
1979	Mother Theresa awarded the Nobel Peace Prize
1980	The Marlborough diamond stolen in London
1980	John Lennon Shot Dead
1981	The Queen's second grandchild, Zara, is born to Princess Anne and Mark Phillips
1982	Falklands Conflict between Britain and Argentina
1983	Soviets shoot down a Korean Airliner
1984	Live Aid Concerts
1985	Wreck of the Titanic found

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Front Elevation

Rear View

Garage and parking area to front



Rear garden

Patio area

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

This Property is entered upon via the first floor:

First Floor

The first floor accommodation consists of:

1) Entrance Hall

2) Kitchen with Utility Room

3) Dining Room

4) Through Lounge

5) Master Bedroom (rear right hand side)

6) Ensuite Bathroom and Dressing Room

7) Two further Bedrooms

8) Family Bathroom

9) Hobby Room

10) Piano Room

11) Informal Dining Room

12) WC

13) Conservatory

Lower Ground Floor

The lower ground floor accommodation consists of:

1) Study

2) Access to Garage with Workshop Area behind the Garage

3) Room to rear with Shower (no windows)

4) Bar and Games Area

5) Bedroom with Ensuite Shower Room

Outside Areas

The property is on a sloping site. There is car parking to the front. There are awkward, unusual shaped gardens to the side with a landscaped garden to the rear. The property sits at the end of a cul-de-sac and there is a right of way to the side of the house.

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.

First Floor

Lounge

Formal dining room to front

Kitchen

Kitchen island

Master bedroom

En suite to master bedroom

Dressing room

End left hand bedroom

Family bathroom

Hobby room

Study / Piano room

Conservatory to rear

Informal dining area

W.C.

Lower Ground Floor

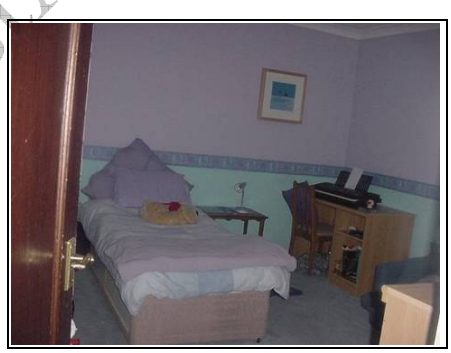
Bar area (games area)

Bar area

Study

Shower room

Internal room to rear



Front bedroom

Em-suite to front bedroom

SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

External

Main Roof:	Shallow pitched clad with a concrete tile
Flat Roof:	Felt covered
Conservatory Roof:	Glass
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic
Walls:	Textured render; construction unknown, breeze block visible internally
Fascias and Soffits:	Plastic and painted timber
Windows and Doors:	Predominantly plastic double glazed windows without trickle vents. Some timber windows left hand side

Internal

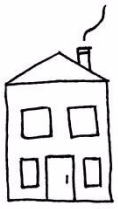
Ceilings:		Plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:		Mixture of solid and studwork (assumed)
Floors:	Lower Ground Floor:	Concrete (assumed)
	Upper Ground Floor:	Joist and floorboard Sheets (assumed)

Services

We are advised by the owners that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (assumed). The gas boiler is in its own boiler room on the lower ground floor. The Fuseboard is locating within the garage.

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

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



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

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

The Good

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

1) The property is large.

2) The property has the benefit of off-road parking together with sizeable garage and workshop area.

3) The property is located at the end of a cul de sac.

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

The Bad

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

1) **Flat Roof**

The flat roof is starting to deteriorate, although we are sure you can get five to ten years life from it with patch repairs. The main problem with the flat roof is that it is flat, meaning water sits on it rather than runs away.

Old patch repair and crocodiling

Ponding to the roof

1.1) Awkward detail between the pitched roof and the conservatory

There is also an awkward gutter detail between the conservatory roof, the main roof and the flat roof, which unfortunately there is very little you can do about it, other than ensure it is kept clear and watertight. We could see no visual water signs internally and we also checked with a damp meter and found no dampness actually in the walls, but we suspect that if it is not well maintained you will get water in the walls.

Awkward box gutter detail between main roof and conservatory roof

ACTION REQUIRED: Regular maintenance to stop dampness getting in.

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

2) **Large Areas of Render and Balcony Areas**

In a modern construction this mass of render and blockwork would typically have expansion joints every ten to twenty metres, depending upon the blockwork manufacturers recommendations. We can see a hairline crack to the left hand side and cracking generally, which has been caused due to this movement in the structure.

Cracks to blockwork of the property

Hairline crack left hand see – marked by the penknife

Crack to gable end on right hand side, taken within roof space. We also noted there was a different type of brick from the top to the bottom

2.1) Balcony Areas

We can see there is some movement to the balcony areas that allows water into the structure. Equally these need to be masticed and repaired.

Cracking to balcony areas that need to be re-masticed

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to seal these hairline cracks as soon as you see them and regularly check for them. The paint work to the property effectively acts as a raincoat so you will need to regularly re-paint the property to make sure it is watertight. If left you will get blistering of the rendering which will be difficult to repair.

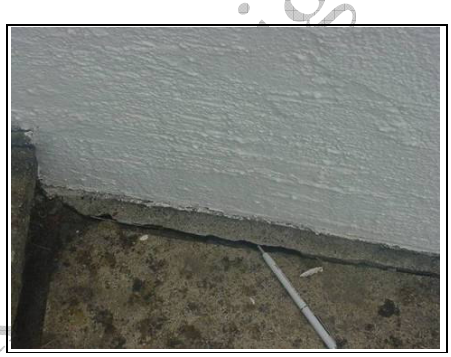
ANTICIPATED COST: A few hundred pounds and it is likely to be a regular repair.

Please see the External Section of this Report.

3) **Staircase Cracking / Movement**

We can see signs of cracking to the staircase and movement to the steps. We simply do not know what their construction is. We have discussed this with you, whether it is rubble, rubbish or concrete beneath. Either way, there is some movement in the staircase and it will need constant repair.

Staircase



Movement on stairs

Staircase cracking/movement

Movement visible to right hand side

ACTION REQUIRED: Repairs will be needed from time to time. It is matching them in with the existing render that is a difficult problem.

Please see the Internal Section of this Report.

4) **Right hand Boundary Wall and Public Footpath / Right of Way**

To the right hand side of the property you have a public footpath and you have a boundary wall. The boundary wall is built with a single thickness of brick or block. These type of walls, in our experience, are susceptible to movement and impact damage and it would not be pleasant if it fell towards the public footpath.

Right of way

ACTION REQUIRED: Modern walls have pilasters (a thickening of the wall of a few metres). You may wish to add these to your wall or keep a vigilant eye on the wall.

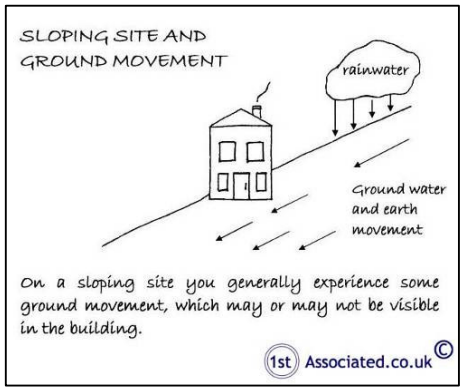
ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £500 to £1,000 for pilasters; possibly more if the is no foundation to build up off of; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.

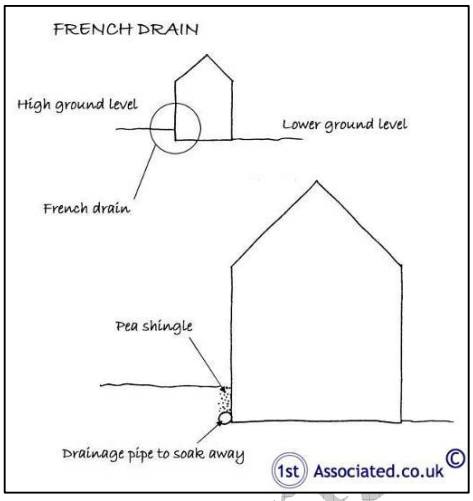
5) **Sloping Site**

The property sits on a sloping site and therefore any rain and ground water travels from the top of the site to the bottom and your building is in the way of this. We showed you the dampness coming through the walls in the workshop area and also the false walls in the bathroom and the room without any windows. As discussed we believe that this may also be going through the floor slab and if you recall, we showed you an internal wall which looks to have had signs of dampness. This also backs onto the radiator and ensuite bathroom to the front bedroom, so it may have been a leak to the bathroom although it does look to be over a large area of the wall. Equally it may just be bad wallpapering!

Slope down the stairs to left hand side



Sloping site



ACTION REQUIRED: We feel that it is critical that you understand the characteristics of this type of building sitting on a sloping site and ensure that you are happy to live with this type of issue.

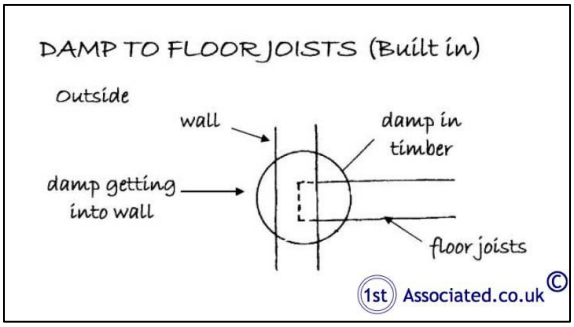
ANTICIPATED COST: Water penetration into the property could be reduced and improved but at a considerable cost, and by this we mean tens of thousands of pounds to sort out the cause and thousands of pounds to sort out the effect (i.e. a deep French Drain and external tanking and internally a false wall and membrane). The choice is yours but we do feel that you could spend a lot of time and energy to make this property watertight.

6) **<u>Embedded Timbers to Upper Ground Floor</u>**

As far as we can see you have embedded timbers for the first floor joists (viewed when we lifted the ceiling in the workshop area / bar / bedroom without any windows for example).

Looking above ceiling

Our concern is that they are embedded into the rear wall which in turn has dampness within it as is evident by the deterioration to the wall in the workshop and high damp meter reading. We cannot see how dampness would not have occurred over the thirty odd years that the building has been in existence.



ACTION REQUIRED: We recommend some opening up to check the condition of the timbers. We can see that extra preservative has been put on the ends of them but the basic concept of building them into the wall is flawed.

ANTICIPATED COST: Unknown.

Please see the Wall Section of this Report.

7) Possibility of Condensation and Cold Bridging

7.1) Condensation

We believe that you have a higher than average possibility of condensation due to the lack of extract fans throughout the bathrooms, shower rooms and kitchen. We noted in the ensuite to the master bedroom that there is an extract fan in the ceiling. Where extract fans in the ceilings are used, we would much prefer them to be next to the source of the moisture i.e. the shower. We noticed on the upper ground floor family bathrooms that there was mould and no extract fan at all.

7.2) Cold Bridging

Condensation in this property could also come about from cold bridging, particularly through the rear walls.

ACTION REQUIRED: Add extract fans..

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

Please see cold bridging article at end of report.

8) **Mass of Conifers**

To the rear of the garden there is a mass of conifers which give good privacy but also need maintenance.

ACTION REQUIRED: Maintain

Please see Trees Section of the report.

Mass of conifers

9) **Services**

9.1)**Microbore Pipe System**

We discussed the microbore pipe system. We personally do not like this and feel that the pipes can lock and in our experience if the pipes are not bent correctly this can also lead to problems.

Microbore pipe system

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend that the microbore pipe is replaced with a traditional wider pipe. At the same time you can improve and increase the radiators to a modern double panel convection radiators if you so require / desire.

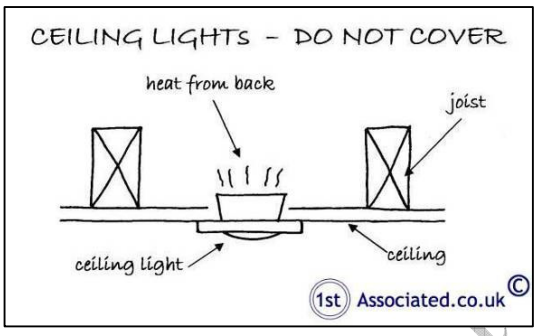
ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £1,000 to £3,000; please obtain quotations.

9.2) **Electrics**

We would recommend that you check the electrics on two accounts. What we saw in the room without any windows is what we would term as DIY electrics. We would also comment that the older style 1970's ceiling lights do tend to give off heat which can become a problem.

DIY electrics –cable connector hard core undone

Please see the Services Section of this Report.



The Ugly

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

The Bad Section has more than an average number of comments we would typically find in this age, type and style of property. To some extent some of these problems are part of the characteristics of this era of design and you need to decide whether you are happy to live with them. We believe it would put some people off purchasing the property.

Other Items

Moving on to more general information.

Services

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

Electrics

For the electrics we would recommend an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent carries out an inspection, test and report to Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE).

Heating

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

Drainage

We would recommend a close camera TV report.

Water Supply

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

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** We would always recommend that you have an independent check by a specialist contractor.

Maintenance

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

DIY/Handyman Type Work

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

Purchase Price

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

Every Business Transaction has a Risk

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

Estimates of Costs

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

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

SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

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

You need to be happy that you can live with the characteristics of this type of property, i.e. one that sits on a slope and from this era. We recommend you re-visit the property once you have read this report.

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 and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT

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

TENURE – FREEHOLD (OR AS GOOD AS)

We have assumed that the property is to be sold Freehold or Long leasehold, with no unusual or onerous clauses and that vacant possession will be available on completion. Your Legal Advisor should confirm that this is the case.

ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?

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

SOLICITOR/LEGAL ADVISOR

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

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS

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

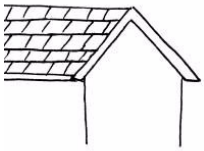
OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION

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

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

EXTERNAL

ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



The Roof Coverings and Underlayers section considers the condition of the outer covering of the roof. Such coverings usually endure the extremes of climate and temperatures. They are susceptible to deterioration, which ultimately leads to water penetration.
The underlayer's function is to minimise wind and water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:

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

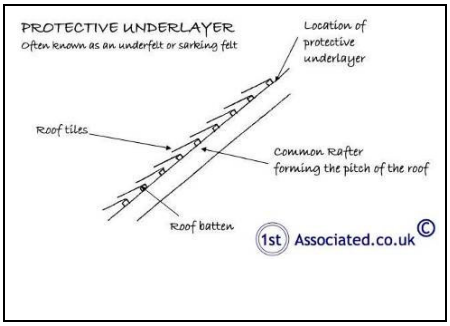
Main Roof

The main roof has a relatively shallow pitched concrete Roman tile which looked true and level and in average condition for its age, type and style.

Concrete tile

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 could see a Hessian base sarking felt. This type of membrane has been used since the 1960s. We generally found it to be in average condition.

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

Low Level Roofs

Flat Roofs

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

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

The flat roof has given us cause for concern because the roof is flat.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Flat roof

Ponding on flat roof

Crocodiling

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

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

Conservatory Roof

Conservatory roof

You have a good quality glass roof. Unfortunately it is poorly detailed where it meets the adjoining flat roof and pitched roof.

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

Balcony Areas

Do not forget that the balcony areas effectively act as roofs as well. We have commented that we feel there is water ingress via the balconies due to the hairline cracking; please see our comments. This in part is due to the single brick balcony wall having some movement in it and in part due to our comments in relation to the sheer mass of render without expansion joints, which would not be a recommended method of building today.

Balcony

Side balcony

Concrete rafter feet on balcony

Cracking on left hand side of balcony

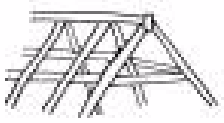
ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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

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

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

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.

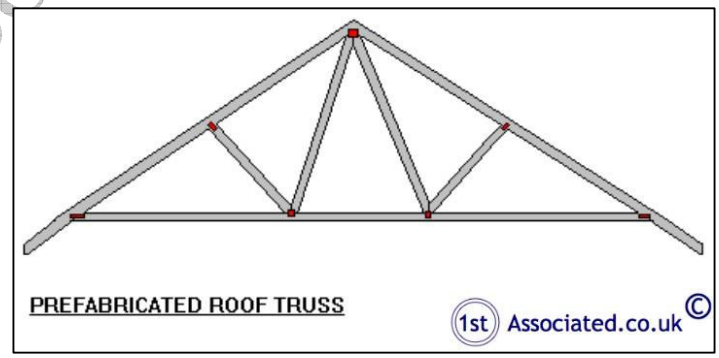
Roof Access

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located on the upper ground floor landing area. There is a loft ladder, electric light and some secured floorboards, though more could be added.

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

Roof Structure

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



Roof Timbers

We have inspected the roof structure for:

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

General view

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

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

Water Tanks

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

Ventilation

Ideally, due to the shallow pitch of this roof we would prefer to see ventilation added at high level; you already have them in the fascia boards.

Insulation

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

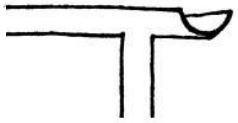
Electrical Cables

We can often identify the age of an electrical installation by the age of wiring found in the roof. In this case there was insufficient quantity to comment.

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

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

GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



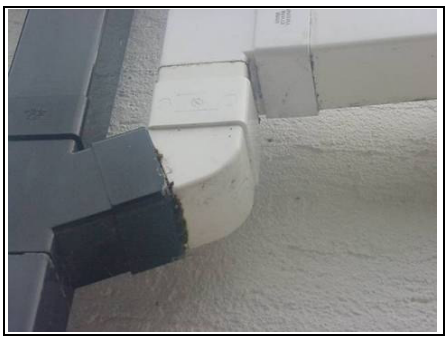
The function of the gutters and downpipes is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.

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

From ground level the gutters and downpipes looked to be plastic and appeared in reasonable condition. There may be some minor leaks, but we feel that most people could live with these.

Plastic profile guttering



Leaking downpipe from conservatory roof

As mentioned, there is some awkward detailing around the flat roof and the conservatory roof. The guttering also has some awkward detailing with regard to the downpipes, which we believe are leaking.

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

Soil and Vent Pipe

The property has plastic soil and vent pipes. We were surprised when we were on the flat roof not being able to see some flue pipes from the soil and vent pipes. We assume therefore that an inlet valve has been used, known by its trade name as a Dergo valve.

Soil and vent pipe to the left hand side of this photo, you can just about see the pipe and the top of it

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.

Render

The walls have a rough cast render. Generally it is in reasonable condition, apart from the hairline cracking and slight darkening of some areas where the sunlight is not getting to it properly and where moss is starting to gather.

Render Detailing

With render a good way of seeing how well it has been applied is to look at the detailing. In this case there are both drips above the windows and a drip to the base of the window, which indicate to us a better quality render than we typically see.

Drip detail over window

Drip to base of render

Hairline cracking to left hand side of property which runs all the way

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments with regard to expansion joints, however the property has stood the test of time with relatively little cracking and movement currently visible.

Stone Cladding

There is some stone cladding present. Some has staining, as you can see in the adjacent photograph, and there is some repair work necessary.

Stone cladding

Stone work coming away

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

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

FOUNDATIONS

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

Foundations

Given that the property is sitting on a sloping site we believe it is likely to have had a specially designed foundation; it may have been a pile foundation. The only way to find out would be to request a copy of the original design drawings. We would be more than happy to comment on these if you do manage to get hold of a copy.

Building Insurance Policy

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

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

We would always recommend that you remain with the existing insurance company of the property. We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance throughout this report.

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

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

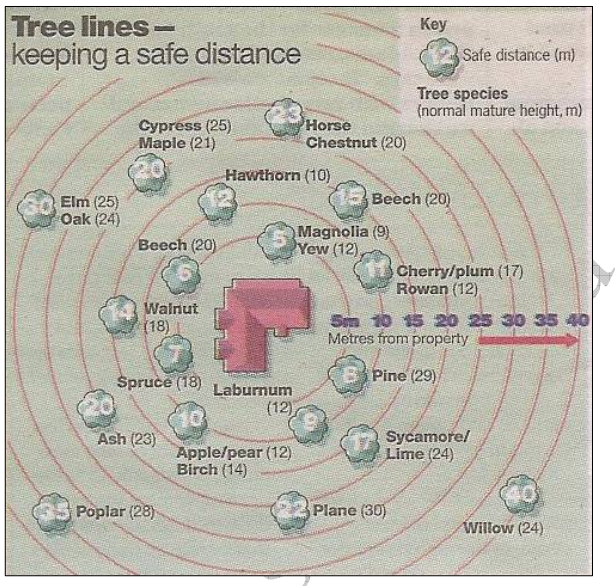
TREES

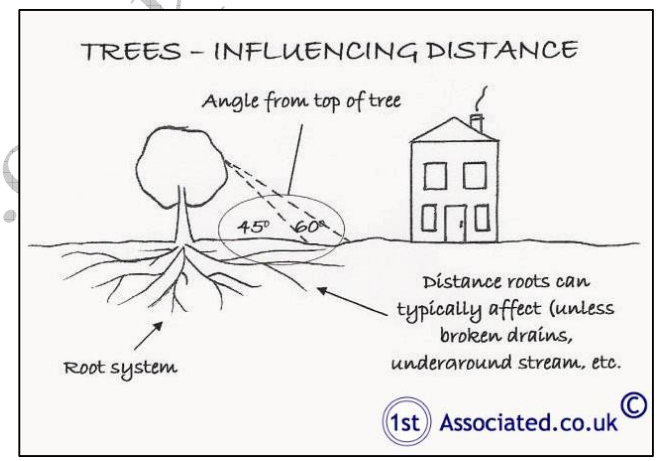
Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.

There are lots of leylandii to the rear of the property, which although they give privacy do grow fast and will need regular maintenance.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Conifers





Influencing Distance Defined

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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

DAMP PROOF COURSE

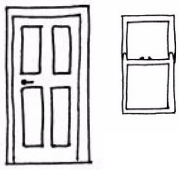
The Building Act of 1878 required a damp proof course to be added to all newly built properties within the London area. It also required various other basic standards. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout London and then the country as a whole,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

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we could see a DPC to the conservatory but could not see one to the main building due to the render. From the age of the property it should have had a DPC built in as work proceeded. Your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.

DPC to conservatory

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.

FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



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

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

Fascias and Soffits

The fascias and soffits are plastic in some areas and timber in others.

Timber areas

Plastic areas

Minor deterioration to fascia board to the flat roof area

ACTION REQUIRED: Redecorate these areas as soon as possible.

Windows and Doors

The majority of the windows are plastic double glazed windows, which generally look to be of a reasonable quality. 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.

Two plastic double glazed windows to front of property

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.

There are timber windows on the left hand side.

ACTION REQUIRED: Redecorate before winter of 2011.

Timber windows

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

EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

The white painted render, when it does need painting, will take a few weeks of your time or be an expensive affair to have redecorated, as it is likely now to require scaffolding due to health and safety as it is on a sloping site.

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.

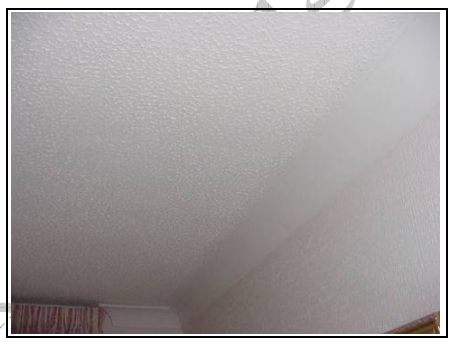
INTERNAL

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

We believe the majority of the ceilings to be plasterboard however, as you are aware, there was also a suspended ceiling system on the lower ground floor. From within this area we were able to gain access to investigate the condition of the joists and the wall that sits on the sloping site side of the building.



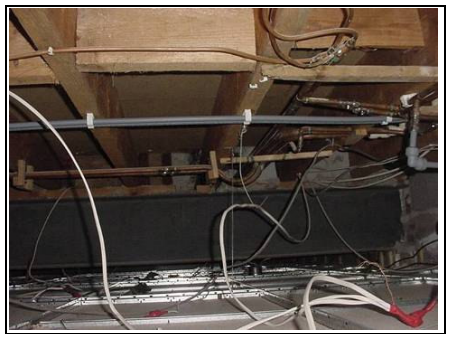
Textured ceiling finish

Plasterboard Defined

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

Checking timbers in ceiling void

Checking for dampness on ceiling in bar area



Ceiling over room without window

Internal Walls and Partitions

These are a mixture of solid and hollow.

Perimeter Walls

These are very interesting, particularly the perimeter wall that was against the sloping site side of the property, where a dry lining system had been put in place with a plastic sheeting to help drain dampness that came through it.

Please see our article on basement conversions where we talk about different ways of keeping the basement dry.

Our concern with the perimeter wall is that dampness is getting into the joist ends of the first floor. To this end we feel it will be worth doing the following:

> **ACTION REQUIRED:** It will be worth identifying exactly what level the floor joists are and whether they are rotting. We did notice that they were a different colour indicating they had had extra wet rot treatment.

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

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

FLOORS

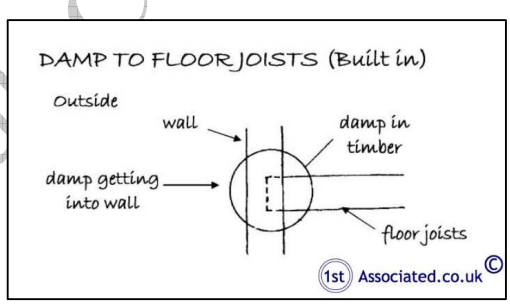
Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.

Lower Ground Floor

We have assumed this floor is concrete. We were only able to see it in the garage and workshop area. Our concern with the floor is that it is suffering from water pressure, as is the wall, due to the property sitting on a sloping site. This in turn can lead to the concrete floor being forced up. Whilst it has not happened to date it certainly does not make you immune from it happening in this scenario. We have only come across this lifting of the floor in underground basements.

Upper Ground Floor

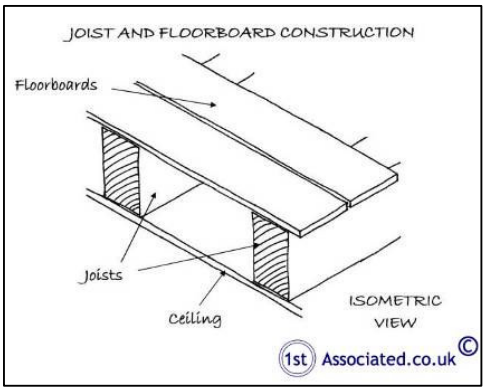
Here the upper ground floor is constructed with joist and floorboards. Our concern is that the timbers are embedded into the walls and these could be rotting.



ACTION REQUIRED: We would suggest a section of the wall is opened up to check the condition of the timbers.

Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

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



First and Second Floors

We have assumed that the first and second floor construction is joist and floorboards with embedded timbers, as this is typical in this age of property.

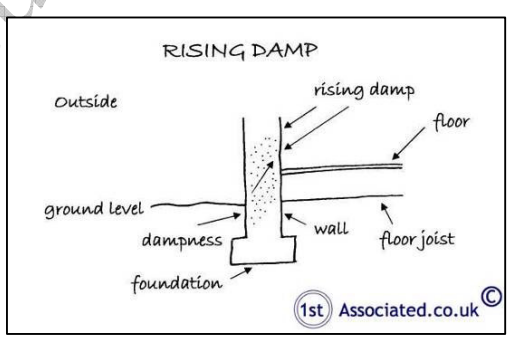
Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with fitted carpets and floor coverings. The comments we have made are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction. We would emphasise that we have not opened up the floors in any way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

DAMPNESS

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

Rising Damp

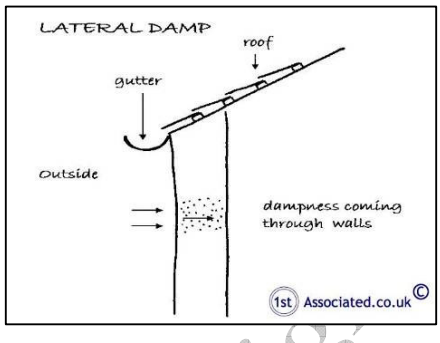
Rising damp depends upon various components including the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation of the material, amongst other things. Rising damp can come from the ground, drawn by capillary action, to varying degrees of intensity and height into the materials above.



We carried out tests with out damp meter. We did find some rising damp on the internal walls on the ground floor that we showed to you, where the paper is starting to come off the walls. We believe we would have got damp meter readings to the rear wall if it had not been dry lined. You need to be aware that this property is being sold during the summer which are traditionally the driest months and as such you are seeing it in its best condition.

Checking for rising damp

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 obtained damp meter readings to the rear wall under ground, as you would expect.

Finding lateral dampness coming through rear wall

Condensation

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

We could see no obvious signs of condensation, however this age of property does tend to suffer from it more than most, particularly to the shallow roof as there is a lack of good ventilation, although we now see that some of the soffit boards are vented.

Whilst, as far as we are aware, only the two of you will be living in the property, and it is a large property, there should be no condensation problems. However, it does depend upon how you utilise the building. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating and ventilation of properties. Normally opening windows first thing in the morning resolves most condensation issues.

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

INTERNAL JOINERY

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

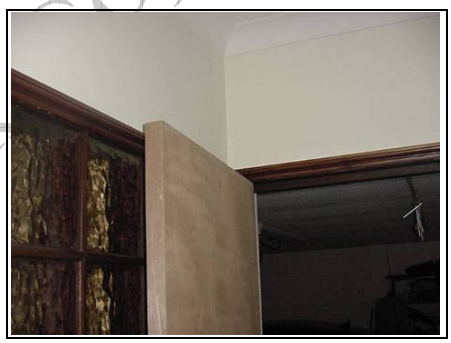
Doors

There are a mixture of doors in the property. Some of them are glazed and if you do intend to have small children or disabled adults in the property then you do need to check that the doors have safety glass. This can be done by looking for a British Standard kite mark.

Glazed double doors

There should be a fire door between a habitable building and a garage. The door looks to be a fire door but it does not have a door closer on, which could be added from what we can see.

ACTION REQUIRED: Check with the existing owners that it is a fire door.



Fire door to garage requires a door closer

Staircase

We noted that the underside of the staircase was exposed. It is more normal today to have a half hour fire barrier to stop fire spreading from the ground floor to the first floor in a worse case scenario. You may wish to take a view on whether you add this.

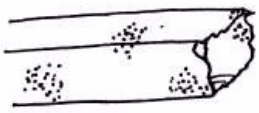
Stairs not lined

Kitchen

The property has an average kitchen in a good sized space and incorporates a central island. We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

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

TIMBER DEFECTS



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

Dry Rot

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

Visually we have not seen any dry rot, although please be aware we have not opened up the upper ground floor.

Wet Rot

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

We believe there is the possibility of wet rot in the upper ground floor joists which may be embedded into the wall to the rear of the property meaning it is likely to be a damp wall. We also noted, as mentioned elsewhere within this report, there is some wet rot in the timber windows to the left hand side that will need repair work.

Woodworm

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

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

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

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

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

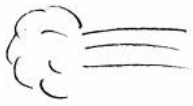
INTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste. It is very difficult to advise on how frequently redecoration should take place. This very much depends upon the use and abuse the decoration gets, for example, within hallways this tends to be greater than for example within a spare bedroom.

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

THERMAL EFFICIENCY



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

HIPs

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

Roofs

Some roof insulation was present although not to current Building Regulations requirements of 3000mm. If you do add ventilation you will need to ventilate otherwise you are likely to get condensation.

Walls

The construction of the walls to this property are unknown; we believe it to be a solid wall. It is very difficult to improve thermal efficiency in solid wall construction without major alterations. These will usually affect the external appearance or reduce the internal space – best left alone.

Windows

The windows are predominantly 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.

Summary

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

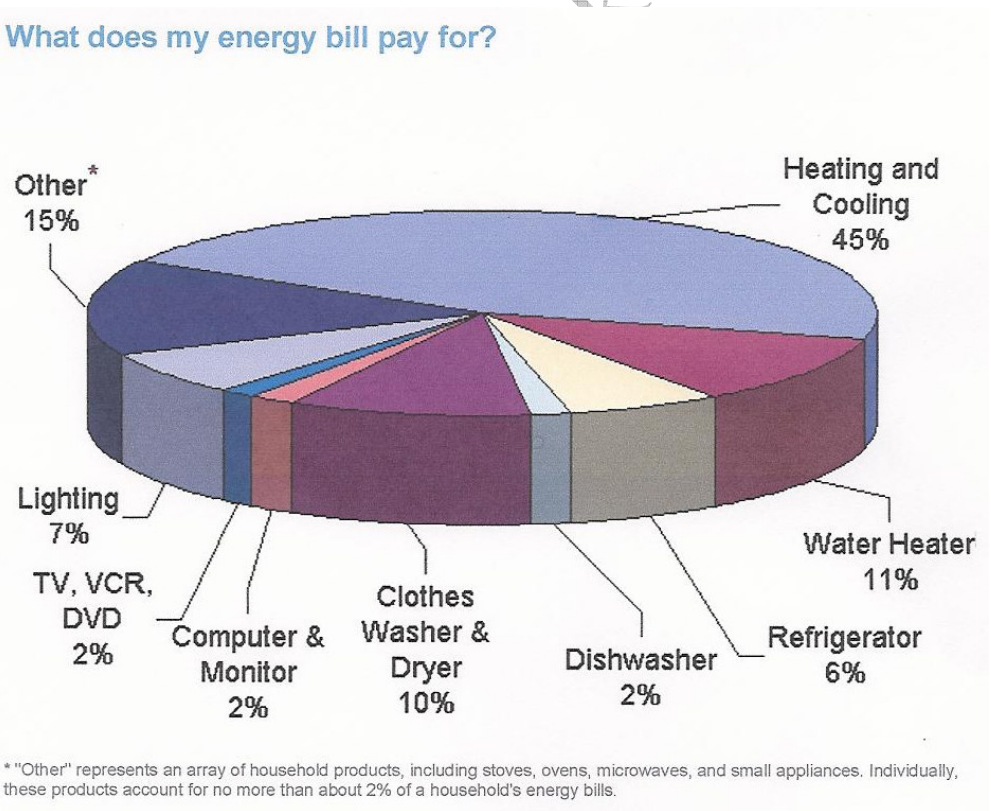
Further information can be obtained with regard to energy saving via the Internet on the following pages:

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

or alternatively www.cat.org.uk

or www.ecocentre.org.uk for an alternative technological view.

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



OTHER MATTERS

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

Security

A security system has been installed. A good alarm system should not only help reduce break-ins but also your insurance. We are not experts in this field and therefore cannot comment further. Further information should be obtained from the vendor and the installer at a later date.

Fire / Smoke Alarms

We noted some battery operated fire alarms. The current Building Regulations require that they be wired into the main power supply. In this design of building it may well be possible to run the cables from the suspended timber floor.

> **ACTION REQUIRED**: You need to look into improving the fire alarm system.

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

Insurance

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

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

Asbestos

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

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

SERVICES

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

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

ELECTRICITY

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

Periodic inspections and testing of electrical installations is important to protect your property from damage and to ensure the safety of the occupants. Guidance published by the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) recommends that inspections and testing are undertaken at least every 10 years (we recommend every five years) and on change of occupancy. All electrical installation works undertaken after 1st January 2005 should be identified by an Electrical Installation Certificate.

Fuse Board

The electric fuses and consumer units were located in the garage. The fuse board looked relatively modern, although not the best now available. We were advised during our question and answer session it was updated in the year 2000.

Fuseboard

ACTION REQUIRED: You may wish to update to a more modern fuse board.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £200 to £350; please obtain quotes.

The reason we would be keen on you doing this is because we believe there is some DIY electrical wiring in the property. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Earth Test

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

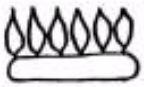
Earth test

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

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

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

GAS



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

We are advised that the property has mains gas, located on the lower ground floor in the boiler room cupboard. It is a floor mounted gas boiler. We believe it is a Stella Rad, but you will need to check this to confirm.

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.

PLUMBING AND HEATING

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

Water Supply

We were advised that the controlling stopcock is located in the garage but we have not seen this. 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 owner to show you where it is when you next visit.

Water Pressure

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

Cold Water Cistern

Please see our comments in the Roof Section.

Hot Water Cylinder

The property has a factory insulated cylinder located in the airing cupboard.

Factory insulated cylinder

Plumbing

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

Heating

The boiler was located in the boiler room. We do not know the boiler name but do recall it is a make we do not come across that frequently. They may well have amalgamated with one of the other major companies.

Boiler

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

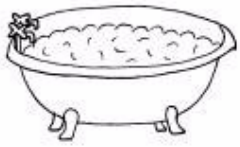
Ten Minute Heating Test

This was carried out and we did find the radiators warmed up. We would comment that some of the radiators are single panel and you may wish to improve these.

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

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

BATHROOM



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

There are numerous en-suite shower rooms and bathrooms throughout the property. Some of them are looking slightly dated now and you may wish to upgrade these, but this is purely a personal choice.

Shower room

We noted that the lower ground floor room without a window has a pump on the water system.

Pump for en-suite shower room which goes into the room without a window on lower ground floor

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

MAIN DRAINS

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

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

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

Inspection Chambers / Manholes

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

We have identified five inspection chambers / manholes.

Inspection Chamber / Manhole One, located to the rear

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

From what we could see it is brick built.

Manhole to rear

Inspection Chamber / Manhole Two, located rear left hand corner

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

Again, from what we could see it is brick built.

Manhole to rear left hand corner

Inspection Chamber / Manhole Three, located rear, middle of property

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

From what we could see it is also brick built.

Manhole to rear middle of property

Inspection Chamber / Manhole Two, located front adjacent to study

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

From what we could see it is concrete concrete.

Manhole to front, near study

Inspection Chamber / Manhole Five, located front, next to conservatory

We were unable to lift this manhole cover. This is located next to the conservatory.

Manhole, near conservatory

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

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

Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage

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

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

We have been unable to determine the ultimate means of rain/surface water disposal. Normally in a property of this age the rainwater drains discharge into a soak away.

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

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

OUTSIDE AREAS

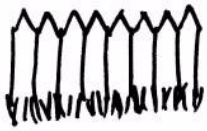
GARAGES/OUTBUILDINGS/ PARKING

There is ample room on the drive for quite a number of cars. There is also a very good sized garage on the left hand side, complete with an excellent sized workshop.

Garage and parking to front

Workshop

EXTERNAL AREAS



Front Garden

The front garden is given over mainly to the parking. There is some landscaping.

Rear Garden

This is a well presented, well throughout through design.

Rear garden

Rear patio area

Bowing fence

Side Gardens

These are on a sloping site, particularly on the right hand side (all directions given as you face the property).

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

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

Neighbours

Left Hand Neighbours

We spoke briefly to the left hand neighbours who was busily clearing up the parking area.

Right Hand Neighbours

You have not actually got a right hand neighbour because there is the path for the right of way.

POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

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

a) Responsibility for boundaries.

b) Rights for you to enter onto the adjacent property to maintain any structure situated near or on the boundary and any similar rights your neighbour may have to enter onto your property.

c) Obtain any certificates, guarantees or approvals in relation to:

i) Timber treatments, wet or dry rot infestations.
ii) Rising damp treatments.
iii) Cavity 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) Any other matters pertinent to the property.

d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.

e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.

f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.

g) Adjoining roads and services.

h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.

i) General development proposals in the locality.

j) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.

k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or are likely to exist beneath the curtilage of the site upon which the property stands and which could affect the quiet enjoyment, safety or stability of the property, outbuildings or surrounding areas.

l) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use and no investigations have been made in this respect.

m) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.

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

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

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

LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES

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

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

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

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

REFERENCES

The repair and maintenance of houses
Published by Estates Gazette Limited

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

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

House Builders Bible
By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press

APPENDICES

LIMITATIONS

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

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

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

ENGLISH LAW

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

SOLE USE

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

ONLY HUMAN!

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

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

WEATHER

It was an overcast day with the odd short shower or rain at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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

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

NOT LOCAL

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

OCCUPIED PROPERTY

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

INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to not having the benefit of being able to open up the flooring at first floor level. We focused our report on the main building and have not had the opportunity this time to walk around the boundaries.

BUILDING INSURANCE

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

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

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

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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

THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

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

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

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

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

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

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

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

Work You Cannot do Yourself

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

INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

www.landreg.org.uk

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

www.rics.org.uk

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

www.halifax.co.uk and www.nationwide.co.uk

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

www.hometrack.co.uk

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

Motleyfool.co.uk

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

http://www.nethouseprices.com/

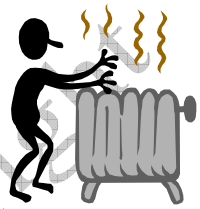
This website offers information on land registry recorded property sales, by postcode or address.

www.globrix.com

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

Condensation and Cold Bridging – What is Cold Bridging?

What is cold bridging and does it always cause condensation?



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

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

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

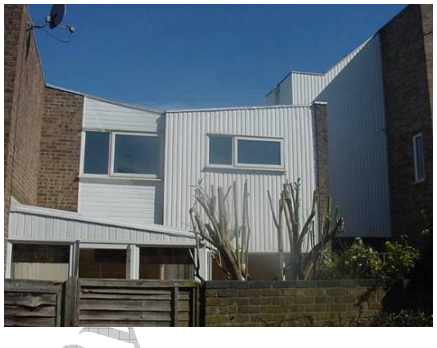
Typically this will be a lintel. Problems can occur with concrete lintels that were commonly used in the 1970's, and also in more modern, better insulated properties, cold bridging has been known to occur on metal lintels. The problem is what to do about it.

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

A close up view of the concrete lintel

When is Cold Bridging Most Likely?

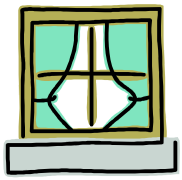
In our experience cold bridging is most likely on properties built in the 1930's to 1980's, most commonly in the 1970's. This is the era when we were just starting to think about insulation and we added insulation into our structures for example with cavity wall insulation or double glazed windows. This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



Typical 1970's house

So what can you do about Cold Bridging?

Typical 1970's houses



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

Where do we most commonly see cold bridging?

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

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

Expert witness cases

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

Is Cold Bridging a design problem?

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

1960's concrete frame

Concrete lintel visible externally but they are not always visible

Dampness and condensation around the concrete window lintel

Do lifestyle issues cause condensation?

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

Basement Conversions
Do They Add Value?

Can I Carry Out A Basement Conversion?

Some considerations when carrying out a basement conversion are: Is the existing basement damp? Does it have suitable head height? Whilst alterations and movements can be made, for example, to give you enough head height by lowering the ground level, as you can imagine it is painstaking, labour intensive and therefore often an expensive job.

Does It Require Planning Permission For A Basement Conversion?

Typically, no permissions are required from the Local Authority. However, do check if the property is Listed or in a Conservation Area or whether structural work, such as moving walls, is required, as this will then require either Planning Permission and/or Building Regulations (we would always recommend that you check with the Local Authority just to see if there are any improvements needed and you also may get some very useful information from them with regards to the local area and the water table level).

What Does A Basement Conversion Involve?

Normally the usual options are either to tank the cellar, which is the traditional method, or to dry line the walls. For either option you really require builders that are used to this type of work, or to be very experienced at D.I.Y.

What Do The Builders Do?

There are commonly two systems in use; one known as tanking and the other known as the dry lined drainage system.

Tanking

This is where the basement is lined to stop water getting in. Ideally it should be lined on the inside but this is difficult where it is an existing basement and often it is lined on the inside. It should include the floor area. This can unfortunately lead to a build up of pressures and cause damage and deterioration if not carried out properly.

Dry Lined Drainage System

This is where the basement is drained of any dampness within it behind false walls into a sump pump, which is a pump located at a lower level within the floor of the cellar.

A Basement Conversion Your Design Choices

There are few choices with a basement conversion, such as:

- Light - do you wish to add windows to give natural light into the basement?

- Ventilation do you wish to add a mechanical ventilation system, or even a real air conditioning system (this is one where the heating, the cooling and the relative humidity is controlled by air ventilation, but these are expensive. The term air conditioning is used when air handling is occurring).

- Sump pumps there is a range of sump pumps available, including those with alarms in case the sump pump doesn't cope or fails for some reason and also there are those with back up sump pumps.

Brief Specification of the Works Carried Out for a Basement Conversion by the Builders

Tanking System :-

- Removal of all items within the basement.
- Preparation of basement
- Adding a sump pump (if so required)
- Possibly replacing the floor if it is not considered suitable.
- Applying first coat to the wall
- Applying second and third coats to the wall
- Tanking the floor area
- Adding appropriate falls onto any water that does get into the basement towards the sump pump.

Dry Lining Drainage System :-

- Clearing of cellar
- Checking of floor timbers and protecting as required
- Preparation of walls
- Adding a drainage channel
- Adding sump pump
- Applying fixing plugs
- Applying plastic sheeting to walls
- Adding dry lining
- Adding a fall to the floor to stop any water.

Getting On With Your Builder

It is very important to build a good relationship with the builder carrying out the basement conversion. We feel fundamental to this is a detailed agreed quotation for the work, together with discussions on any possible extra items that may come to light. Agreement on when payments will be made, for example within two weeks of the work being completed, possibly an official contract, although some smaller builders tend to be put off by this. Set and agree the site rules, i.e. what time work can begin and whether you are happy for the builder to work at the weekend and provide lots of cups of tea and bacon sandwiches, assuming your builder is not a vegetarian!

We would add that the role of project managing the building work is often under estimated and certainly there is a builder inside of you that is trying to get out! Where there are many trades it does require much co-ordination and cajoling from the builder to co-ordinate everyone. It is also important that if things are going wrong you deal with them in a logical and rational manner and if things go extremely wrong and you get into a dispute situation where the builder, for example, walks off site.