

# **SPECIFIC DEFECTS REPORT**

## **Harrow HA3 Relating to Problems with Suspended Timber Floor near Bay Window**



FOR  
**Mr S**

Prepared by:

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

Marketing by:  
[www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk)  
0800 298 5424

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## **INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION**

We have been instructed by Mr S to prepare an independent report on the problems with regard to the suspended timber floor to the front bay window of property in Harrow.

We have carried out a visual inspection of the property.

The weather was raining on and off throughout the day at the time of the inspection.

We are Independent Chartered Building Surveyors. We are registered with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and are members of the Independent Surveyors Association.

The work has been carried out as per our standard Terms and Conditions of Contract which have been emailed to you as part of the confirmation of our instructions. If you would like further clarification please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

This is a two storey semi detached property with a hipped roof and front bay window. The front garden has been altered to allow for parking for several cars and there is a garage on the left hand side and a reasonable sized rear garden.

We understand that the Client moved into the property many years ago and are considering selling and would like advice on;

- i) Deterioration to suspended timber floor to the front of the property near to the bay window.
- ii) General comments with regard to what work was needed on the property. We would add that we have not carried out a structural survey as this is a Specific Defects Report, the focus of which is on the timber defect to the suspended timber floor.

## **CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY**

### **External**

Chimneys:	Brick chimneys
Main Roof:	Hipped Pitched Roof with Clay Tile
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic, possibly some cast iron remaining
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic, possibly some cast iron remaining
Walls:	Flemish Bond Brick Work (assumed) Level Air Bricks
External Joinery:	Plastic Double Glazed Windows

### **Internal**

Ceilings:	A Mixture of Lath and Plaster and Plasterboards (assumed)
Walls	Predominantly Solid, likely to be Brick (assumed)
Floors	Ground Floor: Butted Floorboards
	First Floor: Joist and Floorboards (assumed)

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

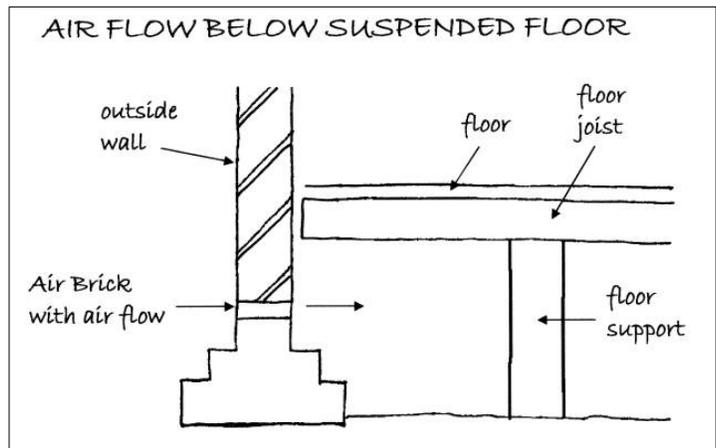
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summaries not ideal as they try and encapsulate relatively complex problems in a few precise and succinct words. Having said that here is our executive summary and recommendations:

## 1. Suspended Timber Floor Problems

### Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined

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



As you are aware we have taken up the floorboards and found woodworm. We believe this to be "active", based upon the amount of "frass" (the chewed up wood), that we can see.

There needs to be a through flow of air underneath the suspended timber floor to dry out the environment and make it less suitable for woodworm and in turn stop their activity.



Opening up a small section of the floor

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that you strip back the defective timber floor boards and dispose of them promptly (ensuring that you don't leave them somewhere where the woodworm could transfer, although upon reading on this subject it appears that they do not transfer from timber to timber that readily).



Looking at a sample of the Timber removed showing "Frass" (chewed up wood)

Once you have removed the damaged floorboards we recommend that you check the airbricks are open to give an adequate air flow.



Opening up two floorboards to the bay window area

Whilst we wouldn't normally recommend a woodworm treatment company, as we are very much in favour of drying out a damp environment, in this instance the best advice that we can give you is that a woodworm treatment company which offers an insurance backed guarantee for the whole house would aid in selling the property in the current market.

All of this work relates to the front lounge however, we would also suggest that you open up a section of the hallway and the rear lounge for the woodworm treatment company to view, so that you can obtain a guarantee on the entire property. You also need to allow them to inspect the roof which we did not in fact do during the course of our inspection of the ground floor problems.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** You can lower your costs by removing any timber with woodworm yourself. This is not a particularly difficult job, although can be time consuming. You will find that also you will do a better job of opening up the airbricks. You should obtain at least three like for like quotations from suitably qualified skilled trades people with regard to this work.



Underneath the floorboards you can see the woodworm holes within the first few timbers



Venting going underneath the suspended timber floor



We were pleased to see that the sleeper walls have slate damp proof courses



We lifted back the carpet in the hallway to see that a new section of floor had already been put in



We opened up a section of the floor in the hallway just to be certain that there were no problems in this area



Upon a visual inspection of the timber that was taken out we could see no woodworm although we could see some dampness

## 2. Airbricks

You have airbricks to the front and rear of the property. These are used to ventilate the floor and give an airflow underneath and thereby avoiding excessive dampness making the environment unsuitable for woodworm.

At present your airbricks are blocked in some areas and other areas such as the front airbrick, we believe it is acting as a gutter due to the addition of the brick paves.

With regard to the rear airbrick that is to the kitchen area, it will be interesting to see if this airbrick has actually been put in place properly as we have seen some false airbricks over the years, so we would suggest that some timber is taken up internally in the kitchen to check to see if there is a clear airbrick opening in this area.



Front airbrick acting as a gutter



Rear airbrick, again possibly acting as a gutter



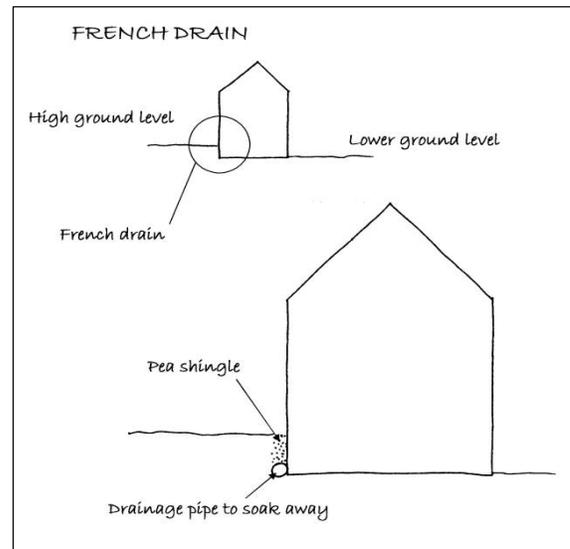
Independent Chartered Surveyor Blocked airbrick, again to the rear

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend that a row of brick paving is removed to the front of the property and a French Drain is added.



# **INSPECTION**

Our inspection has been specifically related to the suspended timber floor near to the front bay window of the property, issues detailed below:

## **Visual Inspection**

Our inspection has taken the format of a visual inspection:

1. External of the property of the
  - i. front
  - ii. rear
  - iii. left hand side

We have had the benefit of a x 16 lens on a digital camera

2. Internal of the property

We have viewed:

### **Ground Floor**

- i. front reception room
- ii. rear reception room
- iii. hallway
- iv. rear left hand kitchen

### **First Floor**

- v. landing
- vi. bathroom
- vii. wc

3. Floor

We opened up the floor in the following areas:

- i. Two areas to the front reception room towards the end of the bay window.
- ii. In the hallway we opened up the floor adjacent to the left hand wall near the front entrance door.

4. We have had discussions with yourselves, the owners and occupiers.

**References**

1stAssociated.co.uk – see article on Woodworm.

## **SURVEY FINDINGS**

1. From our visual external inspection we noted:

Our comments have related to the airbricks with regard to the floor and more general comments with regard to the pre-sales inspection.

2. From our visual internal inspection we noted

- i. front reception room; we found in opening up an area of floor to the front reception room a large amount of frass, particularly considering it is floorboards. We could smell some dampness.
- ii. rear reception room; we would recommend that this is opened up and checked.
- iii. hallway; no woodworm was noted however, some minor dampness was found visible in the timber which means that it is an ideal condition for woodworm.
- iv. rear left hand kitchen; we would recommend that a rear section of the floor is opened up where it meets the solid floor to check the airbricks.

## PRE-SALE INSPECTION

We would start by advising that we have not carried out a structural survey upon the property but had a brief look in the areas, as explained in the Inspection Section of this Report.

### External

#### External Render

We would recommend sealing any cracks in the render (re-rendering if necessary) and redecorating the entirety of the render in an appropriate paint.



Redecorate the render once the cracks have been sealed

#### External Asbestos

You have an asbestos roof to the garage which you advised us that this has already been sealed on the top. We have not seen this but you should check that it is adequate. We recommend that you line internally and put a sticker on advising that asbestos is behind.



It can be seen that the Garage roof is asbestos

Equally if you send a test sample away, you would then know the type of the asbestos and also obtain a formal recommendation how to remove it (our insurance requires us to advise that we are not trained asbestos surveyors).

## External Chimneys

The chimneys are deteriorating and ideally need to be checked however this is quite a difficult job, needing long ladders and/or scaffolding. You may wish to leave this for the future purchasers to carry out



Chimney (left hand side)

## Flaunchings Defined

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



Is there a problem with the Flaunching?

## Internal

- i) Redecoration is required throughout.
- ii) New Bathroom. We would recommend a "P" shaped bath but we would not add a shower unit.

## Services

We noted a relatively old Glow Worm Wall Mounted Boiler located in the garage. Whilst this boiler is old, as long as you have had it recently serviced, most surveyors would accept this as an adequate record showing that it is working and not in immediate need of repair.

## **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:

The amount of "frass" is far more than we have seen for a long time and whilst we are aware that woodworm is more active during the spring and summer months, we were surprised about the amount of frass, particularly as from our discussions, you don't use that lounge area that often so there is likely to be little heat in there. Having said that you certainly have woodworm causing damage to the timbers and we feel that if you work through our action plan, you should be able to remove this problem at minimal cost. Please be aware that woodworm companies are there to sell their chemical sprays and will always be pushing for you to have more done than is necessary. If you can't see the woodworm holes and the frass then it is unlikely that there is active woodworm. Most older properties have had some form of woodworm. If you wish us to comment further, we would be more than happy if you email photographs to us or speak to us and we may be able to come back and view any other suspected area of woodworm infestation.

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

For and on Behalf of  
Independent Chartered Surveyors

This Report is dated: XXXXXXXX

# **LIMITATIONS**

## **Specific Defects Report**

### **1. Conditions of Engagement**

Please note: references to the masculine include, where appropriate, the feminine.

Subject to express agreement to the contrary (which in this particular case has been none) and any agreed amendments/additions (of which in this particular case there have been none), the terms on which the Surveyor will undertake the Specific Defects Report are set out below.

Based upon a visual inspection as defined below the Surveyor will advise the Client by means of a written report as to his opinion of the visible condition and state of repair of the specific problem or problems only. In this instance the focus of the report is limited to the woodworm in the front lounge.

### **2. The Inspection**

#### a) Accessibility and Voids

The Surveyor will base this report on a visual inspection and accordingly its scope is limited. It does not include an inspection of those areas, which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible. Our visual inspection will relate to the specific defects shown to us only.

#### b) Floors

We have opened up the floors as specified in the main report.

c) Roofs

The Surveyor will not inspect the roofs in this instance.

d) Boundaries, Grounds and Outbuildings

The inspection will not include boundaries, grounds and outbuildings unless specifically stated (none stated).

e) Services

No services inspected.

f) Areas not inspected

The Surveyor will have only inspected those areas identified within the report. His report will be based upon possible or probable defects based upon what he has seen together with his knowledge of that type of structure. If you feel that any further areas need inspection then please advise us immediately.

g) Specific Defects Report

As this is a report upon a Specific Defect we do not offer any comment or guidance upon reactive maintenance and/or planned or routine maintenance items.

h) Whilst we have used reasonable skill and care in preparing this report, it should be appreciated that the Chartered Surveyors cannot offer any guarantee that the property will be free from future defects or that existing defects will not suffer from further deterioration;

### 3. Deleterious and Hazardous materials

a) Unless otherwise expressly stated in the Report, the Surveyor will assume that no deleterious or hazardous materials or techniques have been used in the construction of the property. However the Surveyor will advise in the report if in his view there is a likelihood that high alumina cement (HAC) concrete has been used in the construction and

that in such cases specific enquiries should be made or tests carried out by a specialist.

#### **4. Contamination**

The Surveyor will not comment upon the existence of contamination as this can only be established by appropriate specialists. Where, from his local knowledge or the inspection he considers that contamination might be a problem he should advise as to the importance of obtaining a report from an appropriate specialist.

#### **5. Consents, Approvals and Searches**

- a) The Surveyor will assume that the property is not subject to any unusual or especially onerous restrictions or covenants which apply to the structure or affect the reasonable enjoyment of the property.
- b) The Surveyor will assume that all bye-laws, Building Regulations and other consents required have been obtained. In the case of new buildings and alterations and extensions, which require statutory consents or approval the Surveyor will not verify whether, such consents have been obtained. Any enquiries should be made by the Client or his legal advisers.

Drawings and specifications will not be inspected by the Surveyor. It is the Clients responsibility to forward any drawings and specifications that he has or knows the whereabouts of to us to include information in our report. If these are not forthcoming we will make our best assumptions based upon the information available.

- c) The Surveyor will assume that the property is unaffected by any matters which would be revealed by a Local Search and replies to the usual enquiries or by a Statutory Notice and that neither the property nor its condition its use or intended use is or will be unlawful.

#### **6. Fees and Expenses**

The Client will pay the Surveyor the agreed fee for the Report and any expressly agreed disbursements in addition.

## **7. Restrictions on Disclosures**

- a) This report is for the sole use of the Client in connection with the property and is limited to the current brief. No responsibility is accepted by the Chartered Surveyors if used outside these terms.
- b) Should any disputes arise they will be dealt with and settled under English law;
- c) This report does not fall under the Third Parties Rights Act.

## **8. Safe Working Practices**

The Surveyor will follow the guidance given in Surveying Safely issued by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).