

SPECIFIC DEFECTS REPORT
Relating to roof work and associated elements
London, SW12
(visual inspection)



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INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION

We have been instructed to prepare an independent report.

We have carried out a visual inspection of the property.

The weather was a warmish spring 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

We have been asked to comment on:

1. Work to be undertaken to ensure the property remains wind and watertight within the next year.
2. Recommended work for the next few years.

CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

Top Floor Flat



Front view



Rear view

External

Chimneys:	Brick chimneys
Main Roof:	Pitched and clad in a concrete tile
Gutters and Downpipes:	A mixture of cast iron and plastic
Walls:	Flemish bond construction (assumed)
External Joinery:	Timber sliding sash windows and metal casement windows

Internal

Ceilings:	A mixture of lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed)
Walls	A mixture of solid and studwork (assumed)
Floors	Basement: Solid underfoot, assumed concrete
	Ground/First/ Second Floors: Joist and floorboards, embedded timber construction (assumed)

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summaries are 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:

High level work

All work is essential as it will reduce future deterioration of the property and ensure that the properties achieve market value. We would recommend the following work:

1. Chimneys

Repoint and repair the chimneys. The chimneys are weathered and are allowing dampness into the property. Dampness is visible within the top floor flat.



Lean to chimney



Close up of chimney showing weathered pointing

ACTION REQUIRED: Repoint the chimneys. There may possibly be some rebuilding work required.

ANTICIPATED COST: See the end of this section.

2. Flashings

(all directions given as you face the front of the property)

Repairs to the flashings, replacing the existing cement fillets with a lead flashing and checking the lead flashings to ensure watertight. Currently some water is getting into the top floor of the property.



Flashing badly repaired to the rear left hand corner



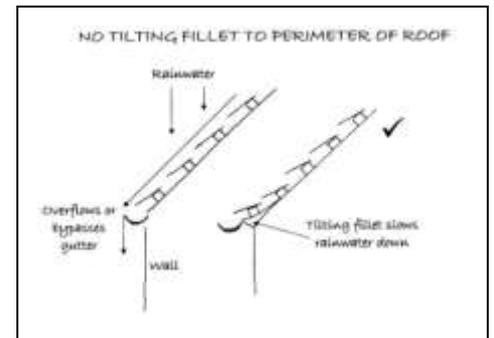
Cement flashing to front gable of the property

ANTICIPATED COST: See the end of this section.

3. Gutters and downpipes and tilting fillets

The property has a mixture of cast iron and plastic gutters and downpipes. We can see that these have corroded and are in need of repair/replacement.

At the base of the roof some of the tiles don't look to have a tilting fillet (see sketch). This may be causing water to miss the gutter and discharge down the walls. This needs to be checked.



Hopper head and cast iron downpipe



Close up of hopper head



Close up of hole in cast iron pipe

ACTION REQUIRED: Repair or replacement. If you do replace the gutters in cast iron be prepared to carry out regular maintenance/re-decoration which is difficult because of the height of this property, then this is the best alternative with the longest life. We would avoid plastic if at all possible, we do appreciate it has a cheaper capital cost. We would look at a modern metal guttering/downpipes as an alternative.



Leaking plastic gutters

ANTICIPATED COST: See the end of this section.

Summary of high level work

The main cost of the high level work is likely to be the scaffolding. The cost of the scaffolding will depend upon how long the scaffolding is to be in place, we would recommend a contract period of four weeks as in our experience there is likely to be other elements that come to light when you have a close inspection for example repairs to parapet walls and roof tiles.

We would expect costs to be in the region of £50,000 - £60,000 and we would recommend going to tender on the basis of five days repointing and rebuilding time on the chimneys and associated parapet walls, five days work on the lead flashings, five days work on the gutters and downpipes with a contingency of five days for inclement weather. The only way we are aware of to avoid inclement weather is to scaffold over and form a temporary roof over the entire property which would incur additional expenses.

Additional work that we would recommend whilst having the scaffolding in place for the high level work

It would make economical sense providing of course that the budget is available to carry out repair works to the property as a whole when the scaffolding is in place. We would recommend work in the following areas:

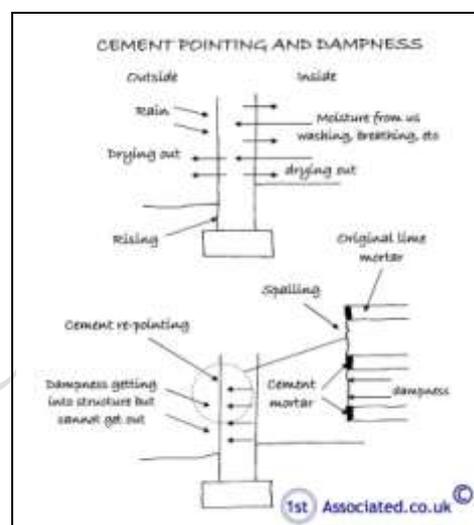
1. Brickwork

The brickwork would have originally been bedded in a lime mortar. The cement mortar has effectively smothered the building. We believe the scaffolding gives an ideal opportunity to check the brickwork and the pointing and we would recommend that as much cement mortar pointing as possible is removed and repointed in a lime mortar to allow the building to breathe and reduce future spalling of the brickwork.

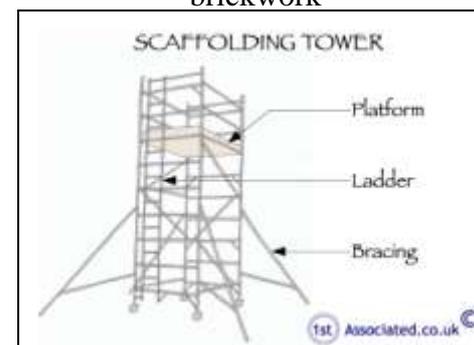
In our experience this type of work is best carried out with a soft brush to remove any loose cement and repoint.

We have recommended the purchase of a tower scaffold to carry out future work to the brickwork and other areas.

ACTION RREQUIRED: Purchase good high level tower scaffold.



Spalling starting to occur to brickwork



Tower scaffold

2. Windows in need of repair/repaint

We would also check the windows whilst the scaffolding is up and ideally budget to repair/repaint the windows.

ACTION REQUIRED: Repair/repaint windows.

ANTICIPATED COST: For budgeting purposes we would recommend £100-£200 per window; quotations required.



Windows in need of repair

3. Low level flat roofs

(all directions given as you face the front of the property)

There is a low level flat roof to the front and the rear of the property.

Front left hand low level roof

At the front of the property there is a low level flat roof that looks to have had bitumen added previously indicating that it is likely to be leaking. A close inspection needs to be carried out to check its condition. You may of course know about dampness that is occurring internally which we are not party to. Unfortunately it was too high for our set of surveyor's ladders to get a proper view.



Front low level roof looks to have had bitumen previously indicating that it has leaked

ACTION REQUIRED: We consider liquid bitumen (often known as RIW) to be a temporary fix and we would suggest you set aside the sum of £500 - £1,000 to carry out proper repairs on the roof. It looks to be a rolled lead roof so the work may be more expensive as lead is a costly material and it depends upon how much needs to be replaced; quotations required.

Rear low level roof to right hand side

These are recent modern extensions; we noted what looked to be a cement flashing.

ACTION REQUIRED: It would also be a good opportunity replace this flashing along with the others with a lead flashing.



Cement flashing to rear single storey roof extension

ANTICIPATED COST: Quotations to be included with the high level work. Costs will be reduced by combining this work together.

4) Soil and vent pipe

We can see some rusting to the soil and vent pipe.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend work is carried out to this too; quotations required.



Rusting top to the soil and vent pipe would benefit from repair

5) Non essential repair work - Repair and replacement of the fascia and soffit boards

Relatively speaking from ground level the fascias and soffit boards look in reasonable condition albeit that they need painting, however it would be prudent to take the opportunity whilst the scaffolding is up to repair/replace them dependent upon their overall condition.



Repair/replace fascias and soffits

ACTION REQUIRED: Repair/replace fascias and soffits.

ANTICIPATED COST: Set aside the sum of £3,000 - £4,000; quotations required. This work can be carried out in tangent with the roof work. Don't forget that the gutters will have to be taken off to repair the fascias boards and will have to be re-aligned and ensure the alignment is correct before you take the scaffolding down, i.e. the gutters run towards the downpipes and don't have any low points.

6) **Roof light**

There is a roof light to the rear of the property which would benefit from the opportunity to repair it or renew it.



Roof light

Other issues you need to consider whilst on the roof

You need to check the roof tiles. We would term the concrete roof tiles as being from the cheaper end of the market with the surface finish of the tiles deteriorating. We would recommend that you take a sample of the tiles and establish the manufacturer (it is usually printed on the back of them) and invite them out to comment on the surface and advise how they would recommend you proceed. Ideally this should be carried out before you have the scaffold up so you are aware of how to budget for whatever work they recommend.

Working with builders – cups of tea meetings – making sure the quotes are specific

We generally find any work will work best with people that you can get on with as well as being skilled and knowledgeable in what they are doing. Whilst this may sound obvious advice we find so often that building work is price led. A lack of communication at the start can lead to problems. This is why we would always recommend cups of tea meetings to get to know any builders you intend to use; clear communication will be in the form of quotations from your builders that are specific in a line by line breakdown of what they are doing.

We would be more than happy to view the quotations you obtain and if necessary write specifications for work requirements that we don't feel the builders are understanding. We have set out this report so that elements of it can be used to help you and your builder understand what work you require carrying out. With regards to quotations if you have three quotations on building work and they are vastly different then in our experience normally it means that you haven't communicated what you want correctly or the builder doesn't understand how to do it or simply doesn't want the work! You should be receiving three tenders with quotations of approximately similar prices. When we have been putting prices in the report we have used the following:

The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £100 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

Finally we would re-emphasise never under estimate how useful a cup of tea can be when in discussions with a builder.

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**WORK THAT WE WOULD
RECOMMEND
OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS**

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1) Woodworm

Woodworm was found in the rear left hand side of the roof. Bearing in mind the stored items in the roof and the general difficulty of configuration it is worth emptying the roof to have a more detailed inspection. Whilst we are a great believer that it takes a lot of woodworm to affect a roof structure of this age, it is certainly to your advantage not to have active woodworm in a roof.

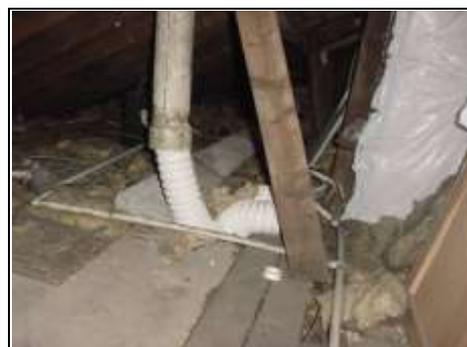


Woodworm in roof

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to empty the roof and check and inspect for woodworm.

2) Asbestos

We found some asbestos in the roof. We generally recommend that all asbestos is removed from the property as in our experience it can affect the value of the property as people get more and more concerned over asbestos.



Asbestos in roof

ACTION REQUIRED: Remove asbestos. The Local Authority will have a list of approved asbestos removers.

3) **Ventilation**

We noted in the main roof that we had access to, some staining to the timbers. We believe this may be due to a lack of ventilation in the roof. It was certainly warm on the day of our inspection. It also gives an ideal environment for woodworm to live in.

ACTION REQUIRED: Add ventilation to the roof. This can be carried out to the gable end.

4) **Electrics**

Whilst we are not electricians we would always recommend having the latest fuse boards in a property. This in turn reduces one of the greatest fire hazards in a multi-occupied property of overloading of electric cables.

5) **Fire regulations**

We are a great believer where there is a multi-occupied building in having an integral fire alarm system that advises where in the property a fire is. We feel this would be a benefit to the property.

6) **Insurance claim**

You have signs of old movement to the left hand side of the property and new movement between the main building and the rear wall. We would recommend that you advise the insurance company that you have recently had a survey carried out with regards to maintenance work required and old problems have been identified on the left hand gable that you were unaware of that you wish to bring to the attention of your insurers and also that there is a crack and movement between the main building and the rear wall, is this covered by insurance?



Old historic crack on left hand side of main property



Crack going to metal stitch



Cracking to left hand side of building between corner of property and boundary wall



Close up of crack

INSPECTION

Our inspection has been specifically related to the roof work as 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. right hand side

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

2. Internal of the property

We have viewed:

Flat B – top floor flat

- i. Lounge
- ii. Kitchen/breakfast room
- iii. Three Bedrooms
- iv. Bathroom

3. We have viewed the roof space within the top floor flat

4. Surrounding areas

- i. front area
- ii. rear area

5. We have spoken to the owner/occupier of the top floor flat.

6. We have utilised a resistance meter known as a Gann Meter for measuring dampness.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Looking at these areas in more detail

The following looks in more detail at the various works that we have recommended; it may in some instances repeat work that we commented on in the Executive Summary but we need to add clarity to the relevant section.

1. Chimney repairs

From what we can see from ground level the pointing to the chimneys is weathering which has led to some dampness getting into the property. Whilst we had the benefit of an optical zoom on the camera equipment we use, it is not a replacement for scaffolding the building and viewing the chimney close up. We generally think repointing will be sufficient but in some cases for example the right hand side chimney it may be necessary to partially rebuild as we can see a lean on the chimney.



Right hand chimney needs repointing and possibly partly rebuilding (all directions given as you face the front of the property)



Left hand chimney



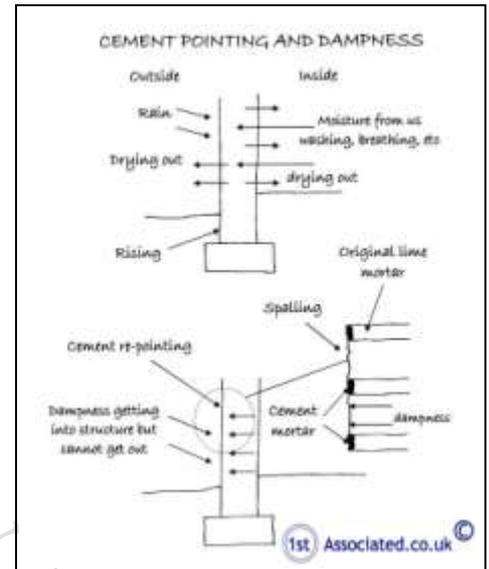
Close up of left hand chimney



Close up of spalling brickwork to front left hand chimney

2. How do you repoint older properties?

In this age of property the walls are kept dry by breathing and taking on board rainwater and then dissipating it during the dry weather as in the adjoining sketch. Unfortunately this is reduced considerably when the walls are wrongly repointed in cement mortar. It is very difficult to remove cement mortar; however you do have the perfect opportunity to carry out repointing when you have the scaffolding in place. Dampness can be seen to be coming into the top floor apartment.



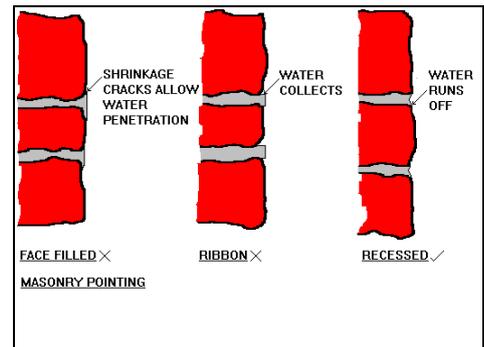
ACTION REQUIRED: You do need to carry out repointing where the mortar joints are weathered such as to the chimneys and some areas of the walls. We would recommend this is carried out in an appropriate lime based mortar. You need to ensure that the builders really do use this as even where specified we have found builders are not using it. The advantages are that the softer lime based mortar doesn't cause deterioration the same way as cement mortar does to the walls.



Badly repointed brickwork in cement mortar

3. More information with regards to brickwork and pointing in older buildings

We want to make the general comment that a property of this age needs to remain breathable and the materials used in it need to remain breathable. We have mentioned the use of lime mortar externally for repointing. We would also recommend the use of lime plasters and paint to allow the structure to breath internally (known as micro porous paints). Note that modern plastic based or acrylic based paints can cause problems with condensation within the property as can showers, bathrooms and kitchens (humidity creating areas) which are not suitably vented. By this we mean working and used extract fans.



Range of different pointing to brickwork



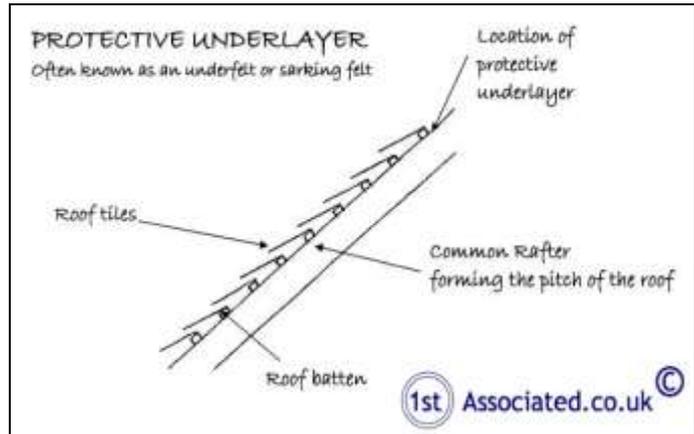
Proud pointing on brickwork on left hand side



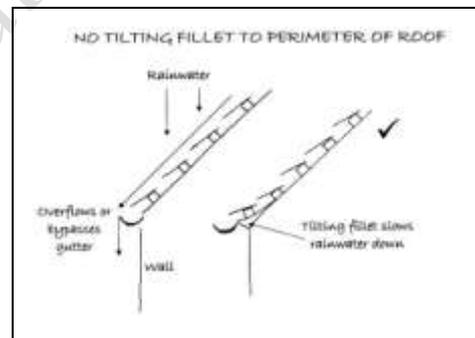
Raking pointing on rear of left hand garden wall

4. Roof problems

The roof originally would have been slate; it has been re-roofed in a concrete tile. This adds extra weight to the roof. We cannot see any additional support that has been added but having said that the majority of older style roofs were over-engineered with large timbers that would adequately support roofs. However a lot of problems have been caused with roof spread which has resulted in building regulations now requiring you to have specific structural calculations where concrete tiles have been used.



We would draw your attention to this and also advise that the tilting fillets have not been added at the base of the roof which could mean that water is discharging down the walls. The easiest way to check this is when it is next raining see if the rainwater is hitting the gutters or not. Nevertheless we would recommend that when the scaffolding is in place a further check is carried out and tilting fillets added if so required.



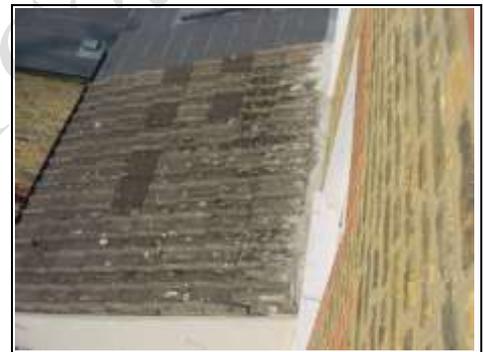
5. Flashings

A flashing is used where two roofs meet or where a roof meets a wall and should offer a watertight junction. We much prefer lead flashings as these allow for movement in the structure; a structure of this age will always have some movement during the different seasons as it expands and contracts. Cement fillets in some areas do tend to crack and leak over the years. For example as can be seen in Flat B to the front right hand corner of the reception room.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend that all the cement fillets are removed and replaced with lead flashings and that you check the existing lead flashes are correctly bedded in soakers.



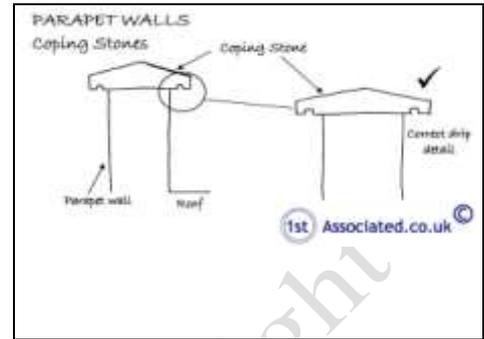
Concrete fillet flashing to front gable



Cement flashing to rear single storey roof extension – not an ideal photo

6. Checking parapet walls

Something that will need checking close up when you are actually at high level is the parapet walls. Coping stones can often be the cause of damage to the walls beneath. As discussed the coping stones look to have been cast in place. The ones that we could see on the rear garden wall had a drip in place although not the V shaped drip as shown in the sketch but more of a triangular finish to the coping stone which we rarely come across but we don't see any reason why it wouldn't work. Nevertheless the parapet walls need to be checked to ensure the coping stones are secured properly.



Moulded coping stone with drips taken from garden wall



Parapet wall left hand side with cement flashing



Parapet wall right hand side with cement flashing



We were pleased to see stepped flashings to parapet wall

7. Gutters and downpipes and soil and vent pipes

Originally the property had cast iron gutters and downpipes. We can see that there has been a general lack of maintenance which has resulted in them rusting and cracking. This is now causing water to discharge down the face of the building which as it is a relatively soft brick is absorbing it and drawing dampness into the property. We can see cracks and rusted cast iron for example to the front right hand corner of the property (the hopper head and the downpipe). You have various choices available to you which have different capital costs and in use costs.



Rusting soil and vent pipe



Leaking plastic gutters



Hopper head leaking to front right hand corner



Close up of leaking hopper head



Damp readings to front right hand corner that relate to hopper head

a) Cast iron

Cast iron is generally considered the longest lasting of all the gutters and downpipes providing it is well maintained however it does have high capital costs.

b) Metal guttering

This may be an option. They tend to be cheaper than new cast iron and are stronger however we would say the jury is still out as to how long they last in use.

c) Plastic gutters

Whilst these are commonly used we tend to feel the driving factor is the cheap initial capital cost but we would also comment that the workforce that tend to put up plastic guttering generally are poorly skilled and we often see the gutters running away from the downpipes and the joints not being watertight. In fact this can be seen on your property. We therefore recommend if you do decide to use plastic gutters for a cheaper capital cost to use a wide flow system which as the name implies is a wider, often more rigid guttering which we believe has a longer life from our experience.

d) Re-use the existing cast iron

You may be tempted to re-use the existing cast iron. This is perfectly acceptable providing that it is properly repaired which will require removal in the rear in particular where it often rusts and often checking for cracks. You should appreciate that it is part of the way through its life cycle. You also need to be aware that it will be in imperial dimensions so when you are fixing new drainage to it, it needs to also be imperial rather than metric equivalent which doesn't fit properly.

Cast Iron Hopper heads to plastic hopper heads

We would also draw to your attention that we find that modern plastic hopper heads are smaller than their predecessors in cast iron. Unfortunately this can lead to problems of overflowing with the hopper heads. You can have a waterproof hopper head that overflows and causes dampness into the property, so ensure you get a large hopper head.

8. Resistance Damp Meter Readings taken with a Gann meter

Room	Readings Obtained	Typical Readings
Bedroom 2 – front right hand side	70-80 adjacent to hopper head and downpipe area 60's adjacent to right hand wall	30-60
Office – front middle	60-80 on valley gutter	30-60
Front left hand bedroom	30 on chimney but this was blown plaster. 31 beneath window	
Rear left hand reception room	30 in rear left hand corner where visible staining can be seen and blown plaster. 60 on rear wall.	30-60
Kitchen on rear right hand side	60's in rear right hand corner 30's and 40s in chimney	30-60

9. From our visual inspection within the roof our view was limited by being carried out to the perimeters with the aid of torchlight.

Note: we have not moved furniture or fixtures and fittings.

The full areas inspected are identified within the inspection part of the report and this should show anything in this section

SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

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

We feel the most costly element of this work will be the high level work. You will be surprised particularly at the cost of the scaffolding especially if the work runs over time; you need to put a contingency in place in case this happens.

You also need to be aware that you have a liability to ensure there is safe access to carry out the building work. The work may well fall under the CDM Health and Safety Rules depending on the time it is actually programmed to take and the number of people on the project.

For longer term maintenance which this property seems to have lacked, we feel there would be a real benefit to having your own tower scaffold to give safer access to the property to carry out low level work, possibly high level work.

We have put some articles at the end of the report which have been taken from our website which we thought may be of interest to you.

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.

APPENDIX

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Roofs

Problems with the weight of concrete tile roofs

Usually where a concrete tile roof is used as a replacement of an original roof the timber structure within the roof, unless it is amended, will not be able to cope with the extra weight. A worst case scenario involves the walls of the property being pushed out, causing what is known as wall spread. A best case scenario is nothing to a minor dip in the roof. Quite simply, if you are adding roof tiles to an older roof you need to add support as well. The Building Regulations now make this a requirement before such work is carried out.

Cracked tiles

We have come across the occasional cracked tiles, possibly caused by impact damage. This type of roof is relatively simple to replace the broken tile and re-fit into the existing configuration.

How do I find a good roofer?

This probably has to be equivalent to the "how long is a piece of string" question. First we would say you need to ensure that whoever you use has your best interest at heart rather than their best interest and that they are not simply trying to sell you the most profitable solution to them. Word of mouth is a great way of finding good builders but do be aware that often word of mouth recommendations come via someone who doesn't have any experience or expertise or working with builders.



Therefore the reasons for their word of mouth could be that the builder turned up on the day that he said he would, finished the job on the day that he said he would and charged the price he said he would, which ironically can be a good recommendation, but not if the work carried out was technically wrong or of poor quality. You should also take great care if your property is an old property as it could be a Listed Building or in a conservation area or simply need a builder that knows how to deal with older properties.

Equally, a newer property also has to be dealt with in an appropriate manner, so the experience the builder has is very important. We have developed a specific defects report for looking at a specific problem, such as chimneys on your property. These originally developed from our engineers report that specifically looked at structural cracks in properties, which then moved onto us giving specific advice on dampness in properties, due to many contracts being involved in this industry simply being there to sell a product rather than to give you best advice.

If you truly do want an independent expert opinion from a chartered surveyor, and many of us are also chartered builders, with regard to chimneys, roof problems, roof repairs, roof materials or any other matters please contact 0800 298 5424 for a chartered surveyor to give you a call back.

Work carried off long ladders and crawler boards



In years gone by most roofing work would be carried out off long ladders and crawler boards. This simply wasn't safe then and is certainly not safe now. A good contractor will insist upon a scaffolding to work from, even where the site is difficult, for example where there is a shop front that you have to work around, there are scaffolding solutions. In that instance using a unitary scaffold. Some people use unitary scaffolds all the time as it saves them time, but we certainly would not recommend crawler boards and a ladder.

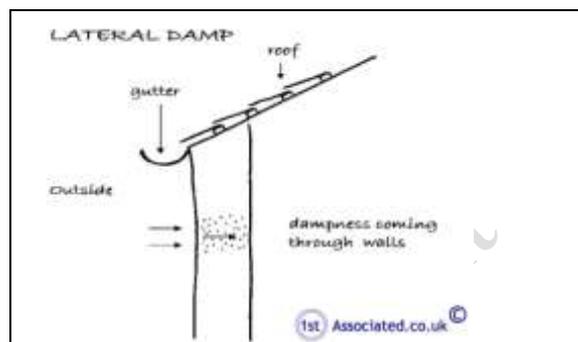
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Lateral Dampness / Penetrating Dampness

Lateral Dampness, What is it?

Lateral dampness, also known as penetrating dampness, which probably explains what it is a lot better, is dampness that comes through the wall. Often lateral dampness can be mistaken for rising damp if it is at low level and condensation if it is at high level.

Let us look at the different causes of lateral dampness.



Dampness Caused by Defective Roofs, Gutters, Downpipes and Hopper Heads

Dampness caused by gutters is known as lateral or penetrating dampness. It can be for many reasons; for older cast iron gutters it can be due to cracks and rusting of the guttering that has allowed water to be discharged down the wall, the wall then soaks up the dampness and this is visible inside. A good Chartered Surveyor should be able to check and confirm if this type of dampness is lateral dampness rather than rising dampness or condensation. They should be able to carry out a close up inspection of the guttering and downpipes either using binoculars, digital zoom lenses or long ladders, depending upon the type of property they should adapt the method used.

Rainwater Overshooting the Gutter

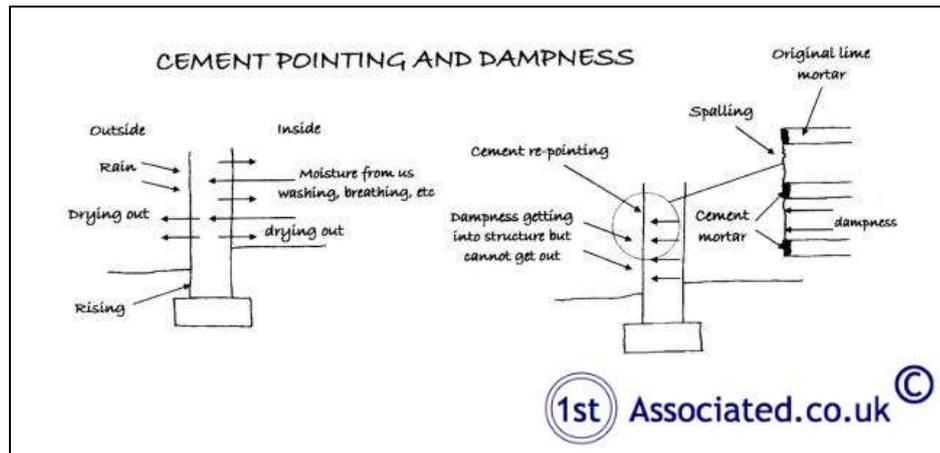
This is technically known as 'surcharging' and is where the roof discharges rainwater into the guttering in such a way that it overloads it and then discharges down the wall below. This can often occur where extensions have been added or roof alterations have occurred, or even when the original guttering was not sufficient or has been replaced by the wrong sort of guttering.

All of these lead to the problem of the rainwater discharging down the wall, which then causes penetrating or lateral dampness in the property, which in turn can cause a variety of problems when it is at what we would term 'high level', this can result in anything from the fascias and soffits rotting and then allowing birds into the roof to next etc and it is surprising what damage this can cause, particularly if you get pigeons into the roof. It can also cause, in extreme cases, damage to the rafter feet, these are the very ends of the rafters, or deterioration to what is known as the wall plate, which is the timber at the very top of the walls; both of which can then in turn cause problems with the roof itself, which then causes further problems. As is the case with many property problems they are a combination of issues started with the simplest thing.

Dampness Caused by Cement Pointing

We could have had many different headings for this section, such as 'lime every time' which is the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building's saying, meaning that on older properties you should use lime mortar. This is for a variety of reasons, but for the purposes of this article, looking at penetrating or lateral dampness it particularly means the problems that can occur to the wall if it is not allowed to breathe.

One of the most common causes of this is repointing with a cement mortar where there was once a lime mortar. This not only stops the walls from breathing it also causes deterioration to the face of the brickwork or stonework. We would always recommend that a lime mortar is used every time, both to the pointing externally to the brickwork or stonework but also to the plaster internally together, we would add, with a suitably emulsion based paint. We have in the past seen modern plasters used and modern gloss, oil based and plastic based paints which seal the inside of the property and cause dampness in isolated areas.



Deterioration to the Brickwork, also known as Spalling

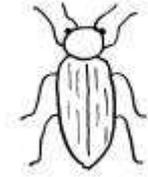
We have given this a separate heading, although often the cause of the problems is the cause of the use of cement mortar, as mentioned above. Cement mortar does not allow the water to drain down the joints like it does on a lime mortar finish, meaning that it travels over the surface of the brickwork and causes deterioration to the face of the bricks. This in turn causes shaling or spalling which then produces a concave brick, which in a worse case scenario can then be 'repaired' (but it is a bad repair) with a cement covering, which in turn increases the problem. Please see our comments above regarding 'lime every time' on older properties. It is very important that the mix of the mortar is appropriate to the brickwork or stonework.

Cracking in Render Causing Dampness

Another cause of lateral dampness or penetrating dampness is cracks to the brickwork. We have found that horizontal cracking or vertical cracking or indeed raking cracking can all allow dampness into the property. It is a combination of the type of crack and the location. For example the elevation of the house that gets the prevailing wind and therefore gets wind driven rain will be a lot damper than the wall on the sunny side of the house. Also, if an area of the house is kept in the shade again this can cause problems. A good Chartered Surveyor should be able to identify this.

Woodworm treatment

If you need help and advice with regard to structural surveys, building surveys, engineers reports, special defects reports, dampness issues, dry rot, wet rot, woodworm, home buyers reports or any other property matters please call 0800 298 5424 for a friendly chat.



Woodworm, most good old houses will have some

If you have an older property and you see holes or dots in your timber, the best thing is not to panic. The holes look almost like someone has been throwing darts in to a timber. It is more than likely that the holes are old and the woodworm has long since gone. Alternatively, in many decades of surveying, we would say that even where there is an outbreak of woodworm that is active (more about how rare this is in a minute) it takes an awful lot of woodworm holes to cause any structural problems. I kid you not, I have kicked enough timbers and put knives in enough timbers to establish their structural integrity over the years and there have been very few where the woodworm is causing structural damage.

We would always recommend having a report to establish whether you have active woodworm before you pay to treat woodworm that's been dead for a 100 years!

Specialist woodworm companies

Before we go any further, let us talk about specialist woodworm companies and how they can afford to give you "free" surveys. This is because, you guessed it, the surveys aren't really free, they are a way of giving you a quote, very much like a builders quote is free. If all these companies went around giving free surveys, and gave independent impartial advice, they wouldn't be in business for that long. In our experience, the vast majority of properties may have woodworm holes but they don't have active woodworm and they certainly don't have woodworm that is active to the extent that it is causing structurally significant damage and if it did, which is very unlikely, the specialist woodworm company's "surveyor" would know if it was a structural problem.

The specialist woodworm treatment companies are there to treat woodworm, therefore they will normally produce a well worded large report advising you that, to be on the safe side, you will need to carry out woodworm treatment, which is ideal because that is what they do. You do need to think of these companies as chemical selling companies.

So, now let us tell you a bit about woodworm.

Types of woodworm you are likely to find

Death watch beetle

Apart from its terrifying name, you only need to be concerned if you have oak or willow within your property, which tends to be older properties. Interestingly, it is probably most commonly found in church roofs (if you do live in an old church roof please give us a call, as we would love to see your property and would give you a free survey, in exchange for a cup of tea!). The death watch beetle likes a moisture content of 16% plus on the timber (death watch beetles are quite fussy about the environment they live in), so if you reduce the moisture content in the area then it kills of the beetles, or they leave.

Common furniture beetle (it may be a common furniture beetle but it is still fussy)



This is, as the name suggests, far more common. It affects most woods. This beetle also likes a moisture content of 16% plus. Again, reduce the moisture content and you will reduce the common furniture beetle. Interestingly enough, when we have found it in quite modern properties and wondered why, and have spoken to other surveyors, particularly older surveyors, it is generally thought that the woodworm is brought in on older pieces of furniture that has been acquired. Often this is put down at the base or top of the stairs when the furniture is brought in, so these are areas where we find the common furniture

beetle. We were told by an older surveyor (or he would probably prefer to be known as experienced) that much of it was brought in when timber boxes used to be used for house removal. The hole is normally one to two millimetres in diameter. We would emphasise that it is usually no longer active, as this is a flight hole.

What is frass and why is it important?

One way of seeing if woodworm is active, because this is what we are looking for, is to see if there is any frass. Before you ask what frass is, this is simply the chewed up sawdust that the beetle leaves behind. Therefore, if it is relatively recent there should be some frass about. We simply tap the timber to see if there is any frass (this works particularly well in a roof in torchlight). We also need to examine the colour of the frass as well; a light coloured dust and a light coloured hole indicates this is relatively recent. Obviously if it is a darker coloured frass, or a darker coloured hole, it means it is older and the woodworm may have gone.

Unfortunately, having undisturbed frass is not easy on floorboards and floor joists, etc, as the mere act of walking on the floorboards can create frass, but don't worry, in these areas there are other ways of discovering whether there is woodworm.

The fussy woodworm

We would just reiterate that woodworm like damp conditions, therefore, if you reduce the dampness in an area you kill the woodworm. They are also really keen on sap wood, which is the juicy timber between the heart wood, which is at the centre of the tree, and the bark,

though it has to be said that some of them like eating the dry wood veneers; it has been said by experts that they are probably attracted by eating the animal glue.

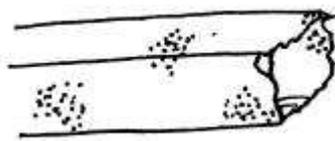
The first cuckoo of spring, nice to hear, but is also a good time to see woodworm

The spring is the time of year when woodworm breed and lay their eggs. We have heard some people say it is in April/May and others say it is in July (which seems a late spring to us). It is at these times that you can see the woodworm. It is recommended that you put tissue over the woodworm holes to see if they force the way through the tissue (they are obviously alive if they do this). They also tend to congregate around areas, such as areas of natural light, i.e. roof windows, or the roof access if they are in the roof, or by windows and doors if they are in the floor.



Finally, one of the big mysteries: our older surveyor (we mean experienced) has seen woodworm holes through lead, which, to us, was either a very determined woodworm that we wouldn't like to come across, or something else; we are not sure what!

Woodworm treatment companies use poison to kill the beetles, or do they?



Woodworm specialists do use a poison that they spray around on timber surfaces. This always intrigues us, as there are many surfaces that are hidden, or indeed not accessible, and obviously the woodworm is deep in the timber during most of its life, apart from in spring time, which is why it the best time to apply a poison spray if you are going to use it.

How do I treat woodworm if I don't use a poison spray?

This is a question that we have been asking ourselves for years. There was at one time flypaper for beetles and we thought this was the perfect answer, but we don't seem to be able to get it any more. There is, of course, the ensuring that the areas are well ventilated and dryer than the 16% moisture content and you can also paint apply a poison to the surface of the timber. Probably the most satisfactory one in our mind is to ensure that moisture content has been reduced.

Asbestos Information

Products containing asbestos have, until recent years, been widely used in domestic construction and the mere presence of asbestos does not, in itself, necessarily constitute a health hazard. Removing undamaged material may release more dust than leaving it in place and it is only when asbestos materials are in a damaged or friable condition, or during installation, modification, removal or demolition, that there is likely to be a significant health risk.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fibre used as a binder to provide rigidity for other materials such as cement. It is also fire resistant and was therefore added to a variety of products to strengthen them and to provide heat insulation and fire resistance.

Asbestos comes in several different types, some of which are more dangerous than others. However, all types of asbestos are considered dangerous if the fibres are inhaled, as they can cause lung cancers. The risk of cancer increases with the number of fibres inhaled. The symptoms of these diseases do not usually appear until about 20 to 30 years after the first exposure to asbestos.

Most people exposed to small amounts of asbestos, as we all are in our daily lives, do not develop these health problems. However, if disturbed, asbestos containing material may release asbestos fibres, which can be inhaled into the lungs.

Asbestos material that would crumble easily if handled, or that has been sawed, scraped, or sanded into a powder, is more likely to create a health hazard. Fibre release is therefore most likely if, for example, asbestos containing material is drilled into or sanded - inadvertently releasing the fibres into the atmosphere.

How is the law going to change?

The law change largely concerns properties in commercial use. This does not mean owner-occupied homes but the law does cover common areas in flats and homes under housing association control. These more explicit laws regarding asbestos replace those which have been in force for some time.

The main change is the requirement for an inspection for the presence of asbestos or asbestos containing materials (ACM's) in all commercial properties. This is required so that any asbestos that is present can have its condition monitored. The inspection will also prevent work being carried out unknowingly on an ACM.

What should be done about asbestos in the home?

If you think asbestos may be in your home, don't panic! Usually the best thing is to leave asbestos material that is in good condition alone.

Generally, material in good condition will not release asbestos fibres. There is no danger unless fibres are released and inhaled into the lungs.

Check material regularly if you suspect it may contain asbestos. Don't touch it, but look for signs of wear or damage such as tears, abrasions, or water damage. Damaged material may release asbestos fibres. This is particularly true if you often disturb it by hitting, rubbing, or handling it, or if it is exposed to extreme vibration or air flow.



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.

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 not opened up the floor structure. We have only carried out a visual inspection and any conclusions will be based upon our best assumptions. We can open up the floor if so required at an extra fee.

c) Roofs

We have inspected the roof of the top floor flat, Flat B 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. In this instance we have only inspected the top floor flat, Flat B and associated cellar. 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).