

JOB REFERENCE: XXXXXXXX

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

XXXX

Biggleswade  
Bedfordshire  
SG18 XXX



**Two storey  
mid terraced  
modern property**



FOR

**Ms X**

Prepared by:

**XXXXX**

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

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.

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# **REPORT FORMAT**

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

## ***GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION***

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

## **TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED**

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

## **A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS**



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

## **ORIENTATION**

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

## **ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

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## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

This is a modern mid terraced two storey property with parking to the front and a garden with patio area to the rear. There is a passageway to the garden at the rear (so you do not have to walk through the house to access the rear garden). Whilst this property is located in a residential area there are also industrial buildings to the right hand side (all directions as you face the property), the railway line is to the rear and the A1 close by.

We believe that the property was built in 2000s. This era of property is known to be built to a price rather than to a quality standard. 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:*

2000	Broadband
2001	7/11 - Terrorists crash planes into World Trade Centre
2003	England win the Rugby World Cup
2005	7/7 London Bombings
2008	Lewis Hamilton became the youngest Formula One World Champion
2009	The Shrewsbury Hoard is discovered with 10,000 Roman coins
2011	Prince William married Catherine Middleton

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## LOCATION MAPS

Note how close the industrial estate is located and the train line.

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## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front View



Rear View



Street view



Passageway to rear



Rear garden



Rear garden patio area

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Industrial buildings



Nearby industrial buildings with bridge in the background over train line



Railway line at the end of the road

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## **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

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

### **Ground Floor**

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance hallway and stairs
- 2) Kitchen (front)
- 3) Lounge/Dining Room (rear)
- 4) Cloakroom (front left hand side)

### **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 5) Master Bedroom One (front)
- 6) Bedroom Two (rear left hand side)
- 7) Bedroom Three (rear right hand side)
- 8) Internal Bathroom

### **Outside Areas**

There is off road parking at the front of the property although interestingly not the one directly in front of the door and a garden to the rear which can be accessed via a passageway. Parking is also available at roadside on a first come first served basis.

Finally, all these details need to be checked and confirmed by your Legal Advisor.

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## INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

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

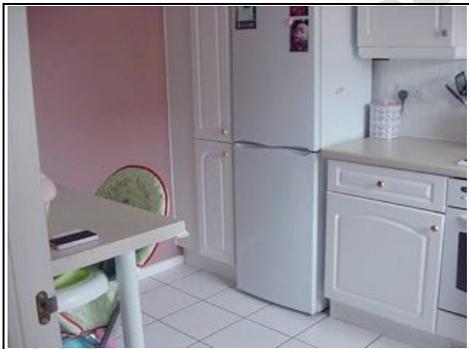
### Ground Floor



Lounge/Dining Room



Entrance hallway



Kitchen



Cloakroom

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**First Floor**



Master Bedroom



Built in cupboard to master bedroom



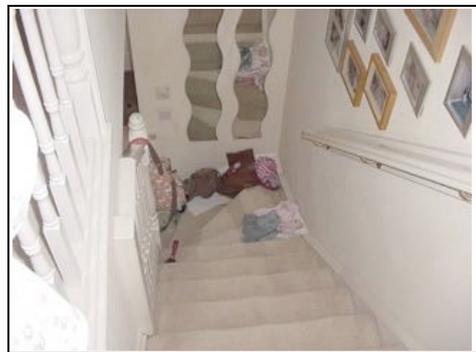
Bedroom Two



Bedroom Three



Internal Bathroom



Looking down the stairs

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## **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

### **External**

Main Roof:	Pitched, clad with concrete tiles
Main Roof Structure:	Pre-fabricated truss roof
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Air inlet valve sometimes known generically by the trade name durgo valve which discharges into the roof space
Walls:	Stretcher Bond Brickwork (assumed)
Fascias and Soffits:	Plastic
Windows and Doors:	Plastic double glazed windows with trickle vents

### **Internal**

Ceilings:	Plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Studwork and dry lined (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Suspended concrete (assumed)
First Floor:	Joist and floorboards onto joist hangers (assumed)

### **Services**

We are advised (by the owner) that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas. There is a wall mounted Ideal Classic boiler which is located in the kitchen front right hand side and the electrics are located in the hallway.

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

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

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

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

### The Good

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

- 1.0) The property is modern and therefore to modern thermal efficiency standards (please note our comments regarding these properties being built to a price).
- 2.0) The property has modern interior although would benefit from redecoration.

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

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## **The Bad**

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

### **1.0) The property is not square**

The property has been built at an angle which we mean is that we can see this by looking at the lintels which show the property is not square which is unusual for this to be this pronounced.



Property not square – twist in lintel



Left hand side of window



Right hand side of window



Mastic joint between two buildings

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

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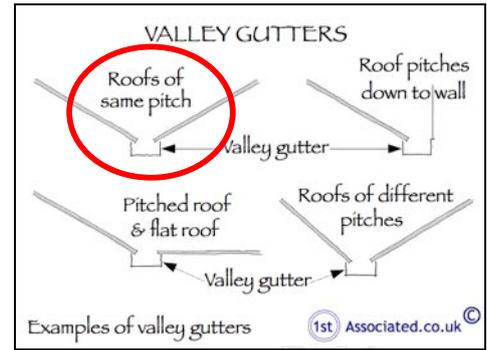
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## 2.0) Valley gutter cement mortar problems

The property has a valley gutter which we noted the cement mortar has come away which in turn means you will get leaks into the roof.

### Valley gutters defined

Valley gutters are formed where two roofs meet and these are generally problematic.



Valley gutter to pitched roof



Valley gutter



Cement mortar has come away

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Check all valley gutters and verge details and remove the cement mortar and replace.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** As this is high level work which may require a tower scaffold but equally you may be able to share the cost with the neighbouring property. We expect costs to be in the region of £250 to £1,000 dependent upon how easy access is; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Roof Section of this Report.

## 3.0) Spalling to the soft red brickwork

We noticed soft red brickwork has been used to highlight areas of the property and are a feature of the property have started to spall.

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Spalling Defined

Spalling occurs to brick or stone when water penetrates the surface and via freezing and thawing starts to cause deterioration to the surface. This in turn allows further water penetration and the surface breaks up further. This ultimately can lead to water damage or structural damage to the area.



For example: to the soldier course of bricks over the windows.

Whilst the spalling is minor this really should not be occurring on such a modern property.

We noted spalling in other nearby properties too.

Please see the Walls Section of this Report.

**4.0) Suspended floor**

The property has been built on a suspended concrete floor slab which tends to mean that there are either large ground level differences or poor soil condition; often made up ground or clay. We wish to make you aware that this is unusual in a modern property.

Please see the Floors Section of this Report.

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### 5.0) Hairline cracking

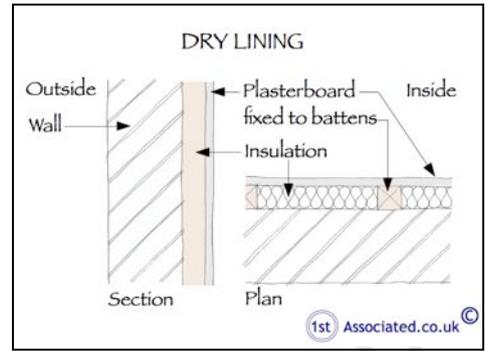
We noted hairline cracking throughout the property

For example: to the front master bedroom.

The cracking is relatively straight which tends to mean that it is a plasterboard crack (the property is lined with a gypsum plaster) and is what is known as dry lined or false wall construction please see our sketch. This type of hairline cracking is relatively common in this type of modern property particularly where there are problems with humidity/condensation.

Another feature of this type of dry lined construction is the trickle vents on the outside of the property.

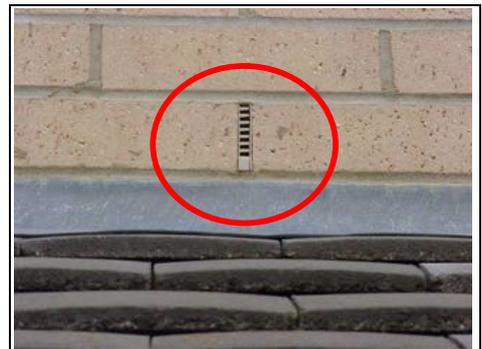
Please be aware that it looks like you are buying a traditional building but it is in fact a modern variation of a traditional building.



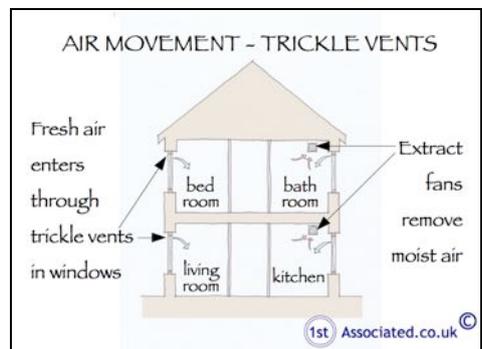
The walls have been dry lined



Cracking in master bedroom



Trickle vent



Trickle vent help air movement in a property

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## 6.0) Humidity/Condensation

This property is likely to suffer more than most from humidity and condensation which is for several reasons:-

- 6.1) There is an internal bathroom which are never ideal as they do not vent naturally through a window and you have to rely on an extract fan.
- 6.2) The extract fans in the property are of the small modern size which we believe are far better replaced with a large humidity controlled extract fan. This type of fan will then switch on and off as the humidity increases.



Extract in kitchen never used

Interestingly when we spoke to the present owner they advised that they have never used the extract fan in the kitchen and did not know where the switch was located. We could not get the extract fan to work and recommend you replace this extract fan.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Again, we would recommend replacement of the fan with a large humidity controlled extract fan.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £300 to £700 dependent upon the difficulty of cutting wider holes; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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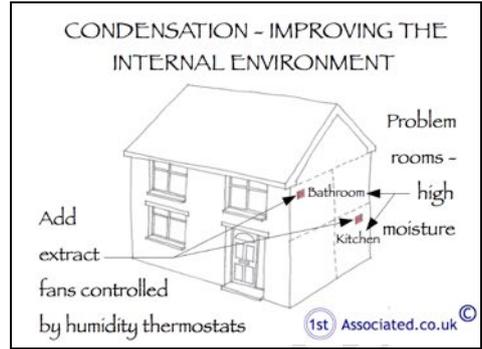
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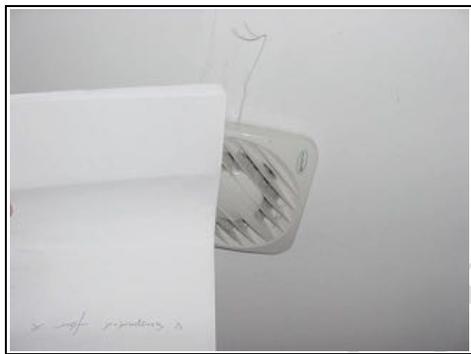
## 7.0) Internal Bathroom

We would just like to reiterate the internal bathroom problems. We noted that the extract fan was not drawing the air from the bathroom which ultimately results in condensation occurring in the property.

Quite unusually we noticed some staining around the radiators which may relate to drying of clothes internally.



Extract fans improve internal environment



Extract system not working  
- Testing suction of extract fan by putting some paper against it



Staining around radiator

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our previous comments regarding replacing the extract fan with a humidity controlled large extract fan but still internal bathrooms can struggle.

Please see the Bathroom Section of this Report.

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## 8.0) Location

The property is located quite near to industrial buildings and train line. Throughout the time we were carrying out our survey we could hear a beeping noise which sounded like a truck reversing which may relate to an industrial premises. In the end the noise was carrying on for so long we did not believe it was a truck reversing but a noise made by one of the industrial buildings.



Nearby industrial buildings with bridge in the background over train line

We also noted that the railway line is fairly close by and that you will probably be able to here noise from the railway whilst in the garden although we did not experience this on the day of our survey.



Railway line at the end of the road

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Is the area noisy? We believe the area is noisier than we would expect. This is a personal choice you need to revisit the property to ensure you are happy with the location prior to committing to purchase the property.

Please see the Location Plan and Neighbours Section of this Report.

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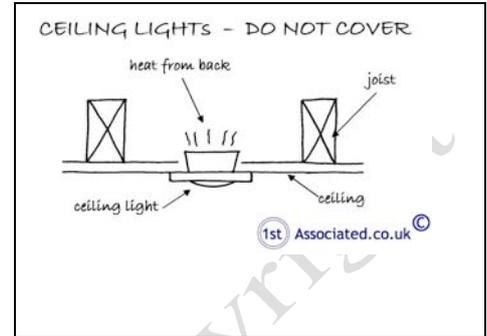
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## 9.0) Services

### 9.1) Ceiling lights

The property has electric lights to the ceiling. In some instances these can cause problems as the heat given off has in some cases lead to outbreaks of fire; these tend to be in the older type of ceiling lights and we recommend that where ceiling lights are used that the rear of the light is not covered; this is particularly the case in rooms with a loft space above it where stored items are placed in it.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Check when putting stored items into the roof that you do not cover the lights.



Ceiling lights must not be covered



Heat and light being given off by the ceiling lights



Ceiling lights



Ceiling lights cannot be covered

Please see the Ceiling Section of this Report.

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## 9.2) No manhole found

Surprisingly we did not find any inspection chambers / manholes within the curtilage of the property. This is quite unusual, though that in itself is not a problem it could well become a problem when/if there is a blockage in the drains. This will mean that you have to dig up the drainage system to be able to unblock it.

### Manholes Defined

As part of the current Building Regulations, you are required to have a manhole (or in some instances a rodding eye is allowed) at each change of direction of the drains or where new drains join an existing run.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Locate manhole/s. We recommend that a specialist contractor be instructed to carry out tests on the underground drains and to implement all necessary repairs and replacements.

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.*

There is nothing which we feel falls within this section providing you are happy with the characteristics of the property which we have mentioned throughout the report.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

### **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. For example we noted that your gutters are covered with a moss which does indicate that they may be overflowing and need cleaning.



Moss covered gutters

### **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 Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE) test and report carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent, which is recommended whenever a property changes occupancy.

#### **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 have not located any manholes at the time of our survey. Whilst we ran the tap for 15 minutes without any build up or blockages the only way to be 100% certain of the condition of the drains is to have a closed circuit TV camera report.

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### **ACTION REQUIRED:**

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

### **DIY/Handyman Type Work**

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 Building Costs**

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour 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.

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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.

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## SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION



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

We would refer you to our comments in the Executive Summary, 'Good', 'Bad' and 'Ugly' Section and ask that you re-read these.

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

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## **MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT**

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

### **TENURE – 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 Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen or are not happy with the terms of engagement please phone immediately 0800 298 5424 or email the secretary from which this survey came from.

### **OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION**

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

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



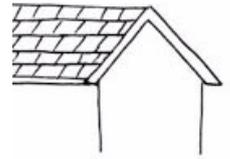
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## EXTERNAL

### 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.*

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

We will consider the roofs in two areas, the main roof and the front porch roof

#### Main Roof

The main roof is pitched and clad with concrete tiles and, from ground level, this looks in average condition considering the roofs age type and style.

The main roof has a valley gutter. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary as there are problems with the valley gutter.



Main roof

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Carry out periodic inspections and maintenance of the roof, as required.

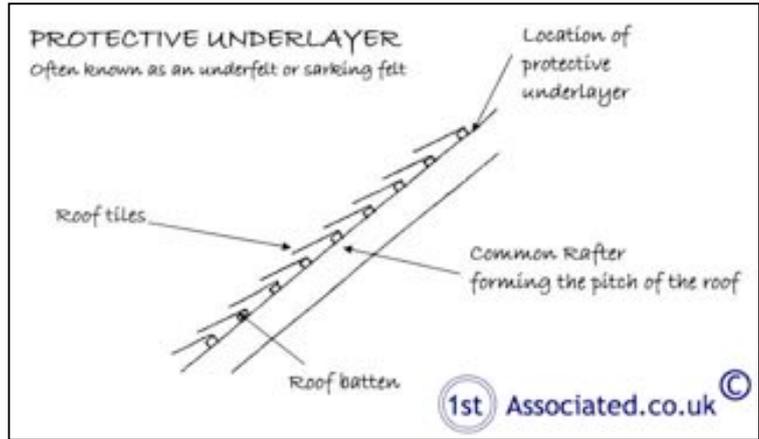
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### Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)

*From the 1940s onwards felts were used underneath tiles/slates to stop wind damage and water penetration, these in more recent years have been replaced with plastic equivalents. These are commonly known as underfelts but now the name is not really appropriate, as felt is not the only material used.*



Protective underlayer

When we inspected the loft space we found a Hessian base Bitumen membrane. This type of membrane has been used since the 1960s. We generally found it to be in average condition, with damage in some areas which is what we typically find.



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

### Front porch roof

The property has a front porch roof which is clad with concrete tiles and a lead flashing which we are pleased to see.



Porch roof

**Two storey  
mid terraced  
modern property**

work on front porch

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

## **Party Wall**

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

### Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

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

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

Finally, we 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.

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## **ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT**

### **(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)**

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

### **Main Roof**

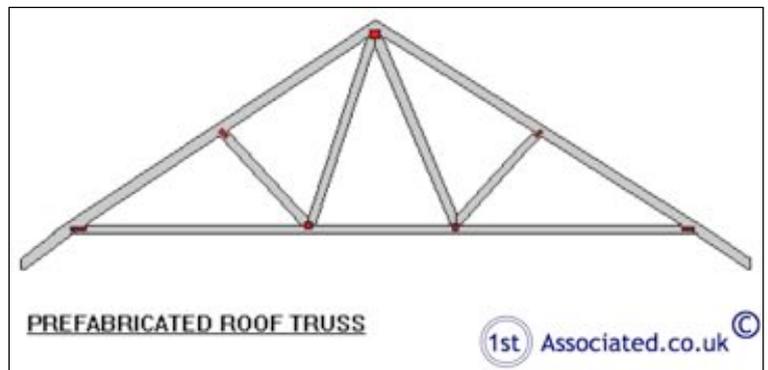
### **Roof Access**

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located landing. There is no loft ladder or secured floorboards. There is a mass of insulation and lots of stored items in the roof space. We recommend that these be added, as it will make the loft space safer and easier to use.

The loft 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.



Prefabricated roof truss

## 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

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 for its age, type and style. 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.



General view of the roof



Strap that ties pre-fabricated trusses together

## Fire Walls

The property has two blockwork firewalls which are located one to the left hand side and one to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the property). Firewalls are also Party Walls.

### Fire Walls Defined

Fire walls help prevent the spread of fire through roofs and are a relatively recent Building Regulation requirement.



Blockwork firewall

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## **Ventilation**

Ventilation is via the soffit boards. We are finding that ventilation is often blocked by companies adding a lot of insulation.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** The roof needs to be re-checked during the summer of 2013.



Ventilation in soffit boards



Mass of insulation in roof space

## **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 of wiring 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.

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## GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

### Gutters and Downpipes

The property has plastic gutters and downpipes. The condition is fairly typical of what we see; they are in average condition for their age, type and style.

There is moss present to the gutters which indicates they may be overflowing and require clearing.

There may be some minor leaks but most people would be happy to live with these providing repairs are carried out within the next six to twelve months.



Gutter and downpipe

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Clear guttering of any blockages and moss. We would recommend you stand outside the property next time it rains heavily and see how well the drains cope with the rainwater particularly looking at the guttering and the joints. We would also recommend 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.

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### **Soil and Vent Pipe**

The property has internal soil and vent pipes with an air inlet valve which discharges into the roof space.



Air inlet valve trade name of  
Durgo valve

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

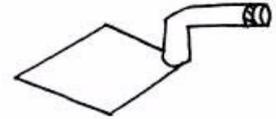
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# WALLS



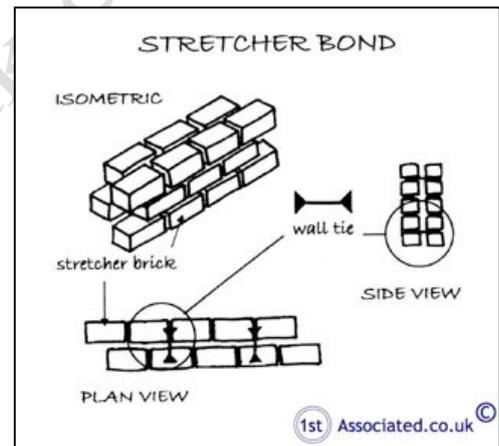
*External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.*

The walls are constructed of brickwork.

## Brickwork

The property is built predominately in a yellow brickwork highlighted in a soft red brickwork and dry lining internally.

The term "Stretcher Bond" means that from the outside of the property, you can see a row of the sides of the bricks (known as "stretchers") followed by a course above of the same stretch of bricks set off so the joint is centrally above the "stretcher". This pattern would repeat throughout.



Please note are comments in the Executive Summary regarding spalling to soft red brickwork.

### Spalling Defined

Spalling occurs to brick or stone when water penetrates the surface and via freezing and thawing starts to cause deterioration to the surface. This in turn allows further water penetration and the surface breaks up further. This ultimately can lead to water damage or structural damage to the area.



Spalling to red brickwork

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Corbelling below soffit



Close up of brickwork

### **Expansion joint**

We noted mastic joints between properties. An expansion joint is good practice in modern properties as they have very little room to move.



Mastic between properties

### **Cavity Walls**

Cavity walls were first used in Victorian times. It originates from solid walls not always being waterproof against driving rain and not providing a good degree of heat insulation. The design of cavity walls makes them relatively unstable and they depend upon the wall ties.

### **Wall Ties**

Walls of cavity construction should incorporate ties to hold together the inner and outer leaves of masonry. We would typically see horizontal cracking where there are problems. In this case we have not noted any cracking however wall tie failure is a progressive problem. We would add as there is no access to the cavity it has not been inspected and we cannot comment on the presence or condition of wall ties. As such we cannot be hundred per cent

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certain with regard to this problem unless we open up the structure. From what we can see externally it appears not to have any problems.

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

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

Please note our comments in the Executive Summary regarding the property being out of square.

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## **FOUNDATIONS**

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

### **Foundations**

We would expect to find a concrete strip foundation.

### **Clay**

This property may stand on clay area or sand area as this is fairly common around this part of the world. Bedfordshire was once known for its brick making in Bedford and further afield in Leighton Buzzard it was world renowned for its sand. (At one time there were more bricks being made in the Bedfordshire area than anywhere else in the world). We have heard an interesting fact that sand was being exported to the Sahara Desert area of Northern Africa! It is, therefore, more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow, etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in clay properties.

### **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.

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

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

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

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

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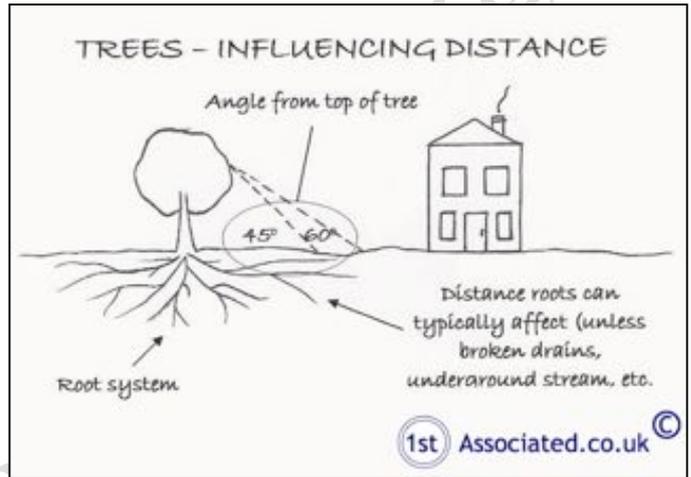
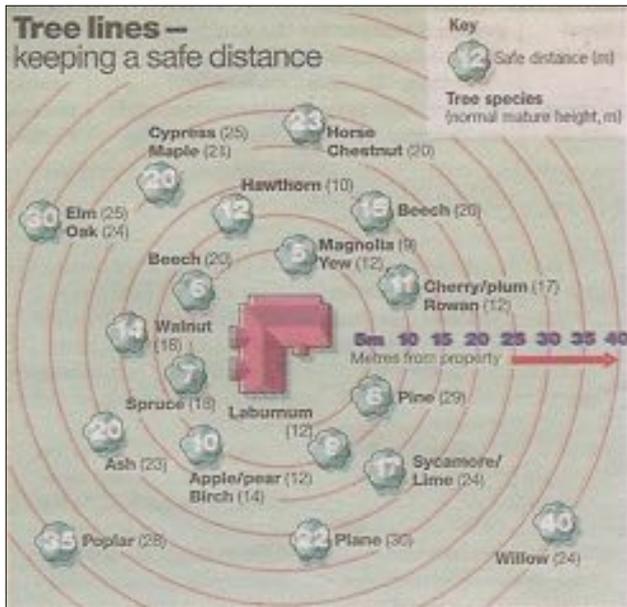
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# TREES

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

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



This sketch shows the effects of trees close to a property

## Influencing Distance Defined

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

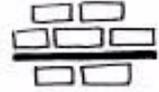
Finally, insurance requirements with regard to trees have varied over the years and in our opinion have got ever more onerous. We have seen the notifiable distance of a tree away from a property to have been reduced over the years and we reiterate our comments elsewhere within this report that you need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

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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## DAMP PROOF COURSE

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

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we can see a DPC above the red bricks.

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



Damp proof course above red bricks

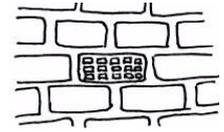
Finally, sometimes it is difficult for us to identify if there is a damp proof course in a property. We have made our best assumptions based upon our general knowledge of the age, type and style of this property.

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## AIRBRICKS



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

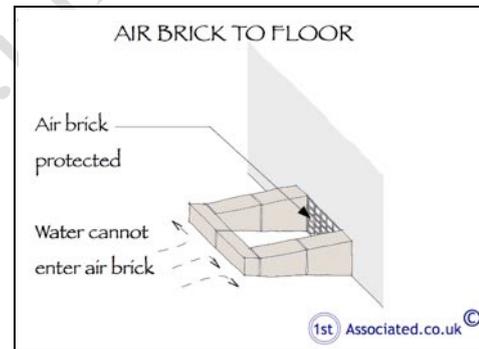
### Low Level Air Bricks

The property has low level airbricks which need to be cleared.

Air bricks are essential to have a through flow of air as this helps to reduce the chances of wet rot, dry rot and woodworm.



Air brick



Add protection to airbrick

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Clear airbricks. Add airbrick protection.

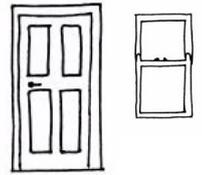
Finally, we have made our best assumptions based upon our visual inspection of the outside of the property and our general knowledge of this age, type and style of construction. We have not opened up the floor, unless we have specifically stated so in this section.

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# 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 and we would comment they are in average condition for their age, type and style. Ventilation is present which needs to be kept clear in the roof space to minimise condensation which can occur in a property that has internal bathrooms and a kitchen vent which is not used.



Fascias and soffits with vents

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Make sure gutters and downpipes are watertight before carrying out any work on fascias and soffits.

## Windows and Doors

The property has plastic double glazed windows with trickle vents.



Double glazed plastic windows

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### Trickle Vents Defined

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

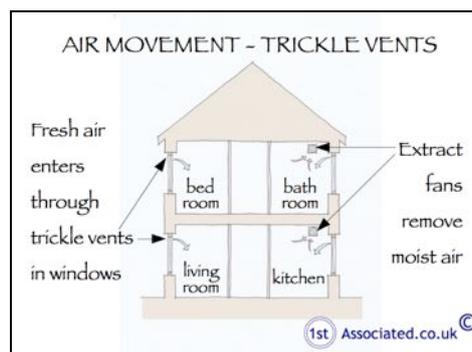
Generally they look to be of an average quality for their age, type and style. In this case remember that trickle vents should be

kept open for them to be of use in allowing air movement within a house.

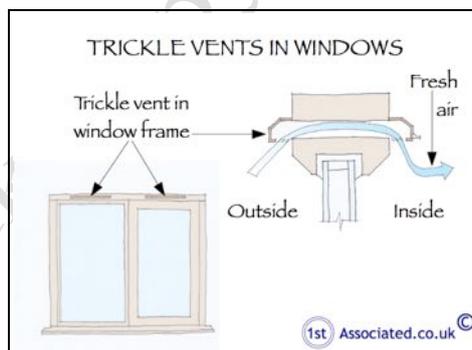
We would draw your attention to the fact that sealed double glazed units can fail, particularly as a result of poor workmanship during installation. Failure of the seal leads to condensation between the two panes of glass and simply replacing the affected units may not provide a satisfactory long-term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

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

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



Trickle vents allow air movement within a house



Trickle vents

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## EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

There is little required in regard to external decoration other than re-staining to the garden fence, shed and gate.

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.



Shed covered with ivy



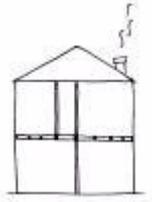
Rear gate

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## INTERNAL



# CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

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

## Ceilings

From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge of this age and type of construction we believe that the ceilings are likely to be modern plasterboard.

### 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.

### Hairline cracks / plasterboard cracks

There is some hairline cracking occurring within the property. This is quite a common occurrence in this era of property particularly where there is an element of humidity and by differential movement in the structure. Unfortunately plasterboard cannot cope with very much movement. They tend to be very straight cracks.



Hairline cracking to ceiling

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## **Internal Walls and Partitions**

These are studwork construction with dry lining. It is of course impossible to determine the construction without opening up the walls and we have therefore taken an educated guess.



Hairline cracking

## **Perimeter Walls**

Originally these would have been constructed with a wet plaster.

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

This comment has been based on the visual look of the wall which is relatively “smooth” and normally means a modern finish.

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

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

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## 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.*

### Ground Floor

The ground floor is, we believe, a concrete suspended floor.

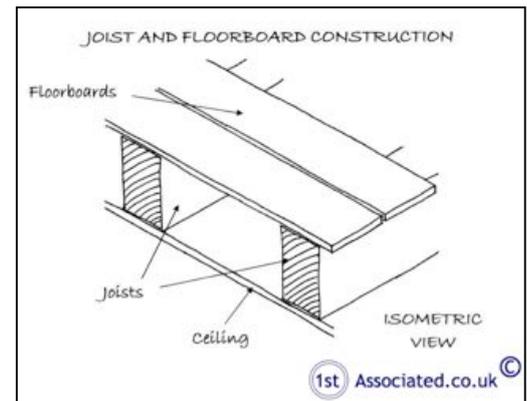
However, we have not opened up the floors or lifted the carpets, tiles, floor coverings.

### First Floor

We have assumed that the first floor construction is joist and floorboards onto joist hangers, as this is typical in this age of property.

#### 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.



Joist and floorboards

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

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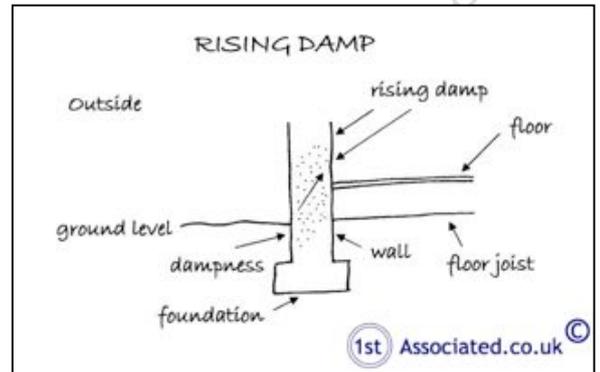


## DAMPNESS

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

### Rising Damp

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



Rising damp

The damp meter readings showed this to be a dry lined plasterboard construction and therefore meter readings around fifteen to late teens is typically what we would find. Unfortunately with this type of construction it hides any dampness. Physically from the external of the property we could not see any reason why there would be dampness.



Testing for rising damp

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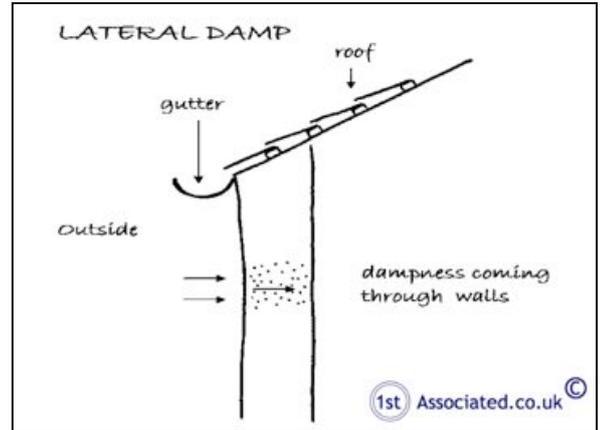
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## Lateral or Penetrating Dampness

*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.*

Again, due to the property being dry lined we were unable to take meter readings for dampness.



Lateral damp



Testing for lateral dampness

## Condensation

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

At the time of the inspection there were no obvious signs of condensation. This property does have condensation potential with the internal bathrooms.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Condensation also in modern buildings does depend how you use them. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without



Testing for condensation

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opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating, cooling and ventilation of properties and opening windows to air the property regularly.

### **Extract fans in kitchens and bathrooms**

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

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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

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

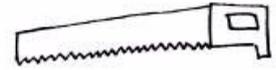
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## INTERNAL JOINERY



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

### Doors

The doors are modern pressed doors, these doors do not put up with much wear and tear.



Pressed door

### Staircase

We were unable to examine the underside of the stair timbers due to it being lined, which precluded our inspection, so we cannot comment further upon the stair structure. We can, however, say that the lining gives a resistance to the spread of fire if such circumstances were to occur.



Stairs lined, also a handy storage space

### Kitchen

We found the kitchen in average condition, subject of course to some wear and tear as one would expect.

We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

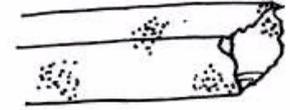
Finally, it should be noted that not all joinery has been inspected. We have viewed a random sample and visually inspected these to give a general overview of the condition. Please also see the External Joinery/Detailing section.

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## TIMBER DEFECTS



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

### Dry Rot

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

We have not visually seen any dry rot during the course of our inspection. We would advise that we have not opened up the floors and we had a limited view of the roof.

### Wet Rot

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

Again, we have not visually seen any wet rot during the course of our inspection.

Again, we would advise that we have not opened up the floors and we had a limited view of the roof.

### 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

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significant' damage. In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active. Our inspection is usually restricted by mass of 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.

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## INTERNAL DECORATIONS



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

Internal decorations are in slightly below average condition and may benefit from redecoration. You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste.

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

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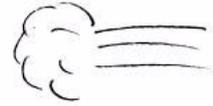
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## THERMAL EFFICIENCY



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

### HIPs

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

### Roofs

Some roof insulation was present to current Building Regulations requirements of 300mm.

### Walls

The property has a stretcher bond construction with dry lining which means there is extra insulation. In this age of property it is likely that insulation would have been used.

### Windows

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

### Services

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

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## Summary

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average (although not to current standards) compared with what we typically see.

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

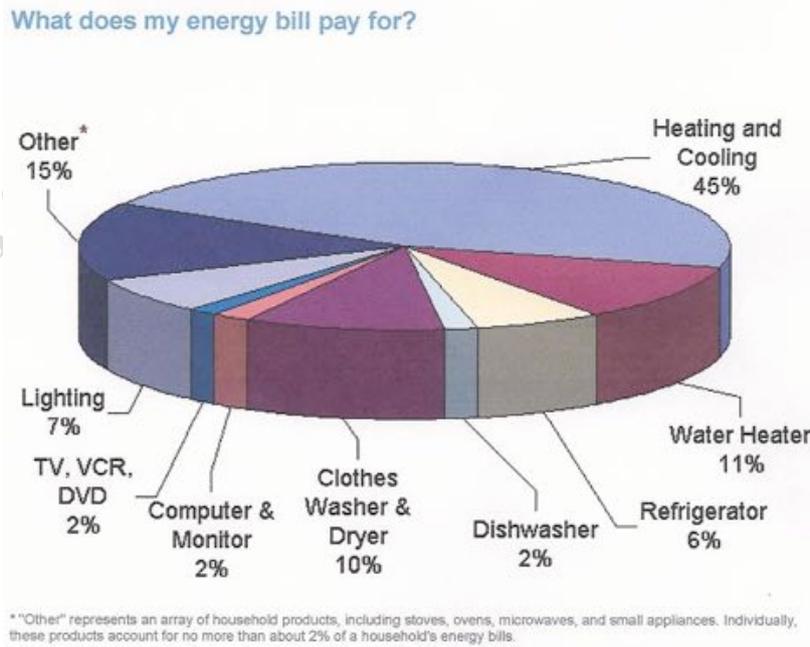
*HTTP//www.est.org.uk, which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*

*or alternatively www.cat.org.uk*

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

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

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



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## 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.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Further information should be obtained from the vendor and the installer at a later date.



Pleased to see locks on windows

### Fire / Smoke Alarms

Some smoke detectors were noted. The current Building Regulations require that they be wired into the main power supply. Obviously in a property of this age this is difficult, as it would mean having surface mounted wires or cutting wiring into the plaster.

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



Smoke alarm

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## **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 are getting increasingly concerned with regard to insurance companies as they are not renewing in certain areas particularly since the government guidelines have been removed which required them to reinsure properties.

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

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## **SERVICES**

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

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

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## ELECTRICITY



*It is strange to think that electricity only started to be used in domestic properties at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 hallway. The fuse board looked relatively newish installed when the property was originally built there does seem to advances every year within the electricians industry so better are now available.



Fuse Board

### Earth Test

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** As the property is changing occupancy an Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test and report should be carried out by a NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.



Earth Test

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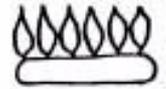
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In addition to this your Legal Advisor is required to make full enquires with the owners to establish if any electrical installation work has been carried out and to provide suitable certification for any works carried out after 1<sup>st</sup> January 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. The consumer unit is located to the right hand side outside the front door (all directions given as you face the property).

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.



We assume as this unit was not opened up that the consumer unit is within this white cupboard

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

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## PLUMBING AND HEATING



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

### Water Supply

The controlling stopcock was not located.

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

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

### Water Pressure

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



Running water test

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### Megaflo boiler system and pressurised unit

There is a megaflo boiler system located in the airing cupboard on the first floor. There is a pressurised unit which we were surprised to see on a two storey property (as opposed to a three storey property). It may be present due to the location.



Megaflo boiler system



Pressurised unit

### Plumbing

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

### Heating

The boiler was located in the kitchen, it is manufactured by Ideal and the model type is Ideal Classic.



Thermostat



Boiler

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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**

The owner turned at our request turned on the heating for approximately ten minutes. We checked the radiators on the ground floor lounge and first floor master bedroom and these were warm.

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

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

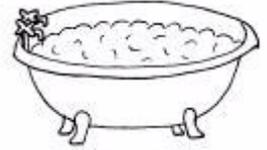
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## **BATHROOM**



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

### **Internal Bathroom**

The property has a three piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in average condition, subject to some day-to-day wear and tear, as one would expect.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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

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## MAIN DRAINS

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

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

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

### Inspection Chambers / Manholes

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

### No Manholes Found

In older properties often there were no manholes. Drainage was a relatively new invention that has been added at a later date.

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

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report of the drains.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

### Manholes Defined

Access areas which usually fit a man (or woman) into them and are put in where the drains change direction.

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

### **Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## OUTSIDE AREAS

The main focus of this report has been on the main building. If you wish us to do a specific report on the other buildings then you need to instruct us for this separately. We are offering here a brief overview.

### OUTBUILDINGS/ PARKING



There is parking in front of the property although not immediately in front of your door. Further parking is at roadside on a first come first served basis. There may be parking permits. The current owner advised there are two parking spaces.



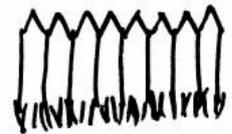
Parking – two spaces

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm. Parking can be a problem in this era of property where for some reason developers seem to forget about the need to park a car.

### EXTERNAL AREAS

#### Front Garden

The front garden is given over to off road parking.



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## Rear Garden

There is a good sized rear garden laid predominately to lawn and with a patio area close to the property. There is a garden shed which at present is covered in ivy which you may or may not like.



Rear Garden



Shed covered in ivy



Patio area

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

There is a passageway to the rear of the property with access into your rear garden.

We are finding that boundary walls of this size, the left hand boundary wall, fall outside the Building Regulations which means that they have not had to be built necessarily on a foundation. You may find you have responsibilities and liabilities in relation to this wall.



Passageway

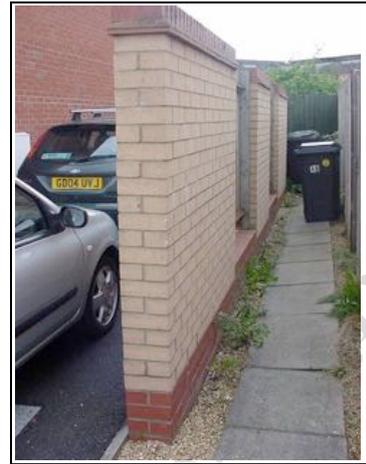
**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor to check and confirm your responsibilities and liabilities.

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



Rear wall to passageway

## Neighbours

As mentioned earlier there are industrial buildings nearby and a railway line which is a personal decision as to whether you wish to live in this location.



Industrial buildings close by and bridge over rail line



Railway line at end of the road

## Left Hand Neighbours

At the time of our survey when we knocked on the front door of the left hand neighbour there was no reply.

## Right Hand Neighbours

At the time of our survey the right hand neighbour answered when we knocked on their door and in their opinion had had no problems.

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## **POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR**

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

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

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- 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](http://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.

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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

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## **REFERENCES**

The repair and maintenance of houses

*Published by Estates Gazette Limited*

Life expectancies of building components

*Published by Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and  
Building Research Establishment*

Surveying buildings

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

House Builders Bible

*By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press*

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## **LIMITATIONS**

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

## **CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT**

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

## **ENGLISH LAW**

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

## **SOLE USE**

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

## **ONLY HUMAN!**

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

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

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## **WEATHER**

It was dry and sunny at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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

## **NOT LOCAL**

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

## **OCCUPIED PROPERTY**

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

## **INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to:

- 1.0) as we did not have full view of the roof space due to the mass of insulation and stored items.



Mass of insulation

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- 2.0) as we were not able to open up the ground floor or the first floor.



Stored items in the roof space

## 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.

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# APPENDICES

1. The electrical regulations – Part P of the Building Regulations
2. Information on the Property Market
3. Condensation and Cold Bridging Article

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## **THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS**

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

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

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

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - NICEIC Electrical Contractor or equivalent trades body.
2. 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.

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## INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

[www.landreg.org.uk](http://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](http://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](http://www.halifax.co.uk) and [www.nationwide.co.uk](http://www.nationwide.co.uk)

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

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[www.hometrack.co.uk](http://www.hometrack.co.uk)

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

[www.motleyfool.co.uk](http://www.motleyfool.co.uk)

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

[www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk)

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

[www.zoopla.co.uk](http://www.zoopla.co.uk)

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

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# Condensation and Cold Bridging

## What is Cold Bridging?

### What is cold bridging and how does it work?

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



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

### Cold Bridging

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

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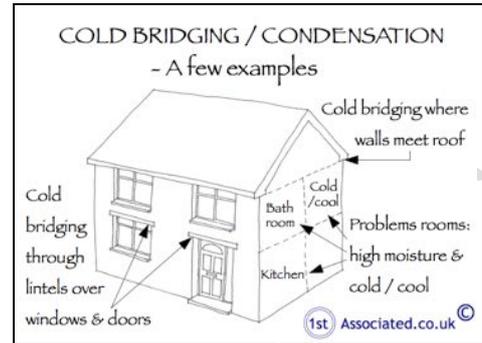
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## Certain types of buildings are more susceptible to Condensation and Cold Bridging

### Here is our sketch on Cold Bridging

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



### Cold Bridging isn't just about condensation on mirrors

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

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



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

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## To give you some examples of Cold Bridging

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



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



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

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

## Commercial properties suffer from Cold Bridging too

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



Cold Bridging in a commercial property with a concrete frame.

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fitted which has costs tens of thousands of pounds. This happened because it wasn't understood what the problem was.

## When is Cold Bridging Likely?

In our experience we have seen cold bridging occurring in

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



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



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

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

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## Problems with 1970/1980 era properties relating to Cold Bridging

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

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

where we added insulation into our structures

For example with;

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

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

### How to solve Cold Bridging

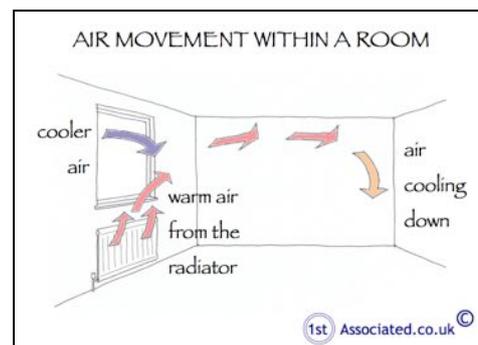
The difficulty is resolving cold bridging. Normally, where condensation is involved, if you get the balance of warm and coolness of the air, ventilation and movement you can reduce considerably the chances of condensation. Airing the room by opening the windows, which seems to have gone out of fashion,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



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



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



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## Where do we most commonly find Cold Bridging?

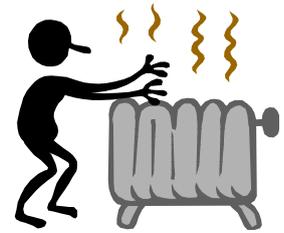
Our thoughts on this have very much changed as we used to say that cold bridging was typically found in properties from the 1960's/1970's. However we are increasingly finding it in a broader range of properties, particularly Victorian properties, where people are trying to live to modern standards of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



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

## Is your life style a factor in Cold Bridging?

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



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

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## Expert witness case, what is an expert witness?

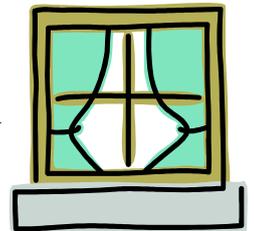
This is where you employ someone who is a specialist within a field, such as us as Chartered Building Surveyors, who comment on problems of condensation within the property. We have been involved in several court cases as expert witnesses where landlords are being taken to court over the condensation that is occurring in their property. The expert witness case looks at how this condensation is occurring and if it relates, for example, to

the occupiers' lifestyle or whether it relates to the way the building was constructed and where there are, for example, cold bridging elements. When discussions of this nature take place in court they can be very expensive.



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

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



This really is a difficult question to answer. We have been involved in a number of cases as expert witnesses or advocates and the answer can vary. We would comment that there are factors that can be changed and factors that can't be changed. For example, the occupiers lifestyle can in most cases be amended. This may involve the occupier having an understanding of the problems they are causing. For example, drying lots of washing on a radiator inside may be causing excessive moisture in the atmosphere. Equally not opening the windows and closing or sealing up vents can be a problem.

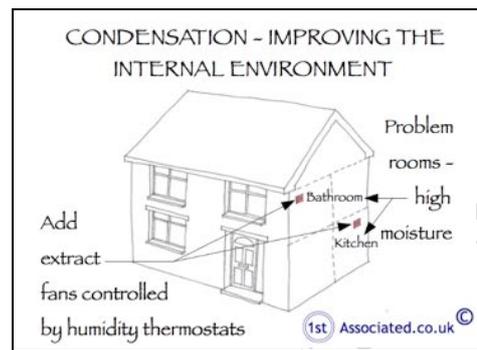
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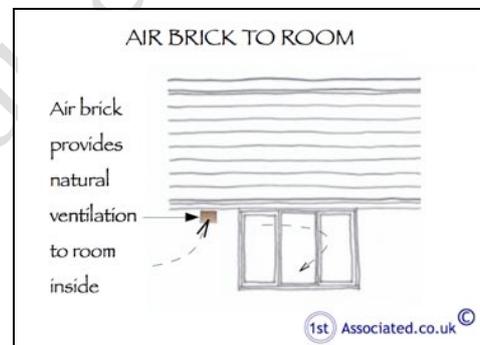
## Design of the Building

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



## Things to remember about an air brick

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



Air brick may not ventilate room enough

## What's happening in brand new housing?

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



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

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

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

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

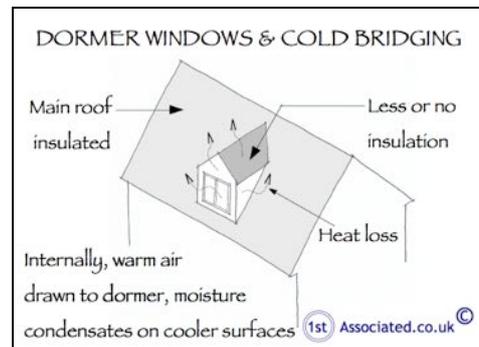
It also depends on what the humidity level is outside as this can be greater than inside. The moisture/humidity will then seek out colder rooms such as spare bedrooms and the corners of cupboards. When you open these at a later date you will be surprised to find black mould.



Sliding sash windows can swell in the winter months

## Extensions and Cold Bridging.

Increasingly we are coming across problems where properties have been extended and it has not been planned or thought through properly. We have come across dormer roofs that simply have no insulation so any heat in the property is going straight out of the dormer roof. We have also come across property problems where an extension has resulted in colder areas within the property and which although not problem areas, as such, our clients have found them not nice areas to be in. It is not a great outcome if you have just spent tens of thousands of pounds on a new extension that you are not happy with.



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## A more technical answer

The above article has been written to stimulate debate and discussion. However we are aware from our experience of dealing with these problems, especially when they get into court, that it can be a very emotional subject. We have come across the terms Chronic Damp Conditions and Chronic Condensation Conditions. There is clearly a mismatch in these situations between the building and the lifestyle of the person within. We have come across buildings which have a relative humidity exceeding seventy per cent most of the time and where mould growth can become established. Whilst this is at the extreme end of what we see, it is of course a concern if you are the landlord or tenant with this issue.

Here are some references for you

Landlord and Tenant act 1985 - [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70](http://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/70)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (known fondly as the HHSRS) - [hhsrs.org](http://hhsrs.org)

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