

JOB REF: MH/MGM

# **SPECIFIC DEFECTS REPORT**

**Relating to Dampness (as specified on page 3)**

**Victorian Terraced Property with Dampness in Fulham**



**FOR**

**A Client**

**Prepared by:**

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

**Marketing by:**

**[www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk)**

**0800 298 5424**

# CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION
2. SYNOPSIS AND CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY
3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
4. INSPECTION
5. SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION
6. APPENDICES
7. LIMITATIONS

# **INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION**

We have been instructed to prepare a report and offer advice on the dampness at a Victorian property in Fulham.

## **Ground Floor**

### **The Kitchen**

Dampness to the rear of the kitchen.

### **French Doors**

Dampness to the French doors.

## **First Floor**

### **Rear Bedroom and Bathroom**

Dampness to the rear bedroom and bathroom

# **SYNOPSIS**

This is a mid terraced Victorian property that has had some alterations and additions throughout the years, including a recent loft conversion (it was still being converted, second fix, at the time of the survey). There are small gardens to the front and the rear.

# CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

## EXTERNAL

- Chimneys: Brick chimneys
- Main Roof: A mixture of a pitched slate roof and a flat felt roof to the rear
- Gutters and Downpipes: Plastic
- Walls: Brickwork in a Flemish bond construction (assumed)
- External Joinery: Sliding sash windows
- Foundations: Not inspected or known.



## INTERNAL

- Ceilings: A mixture of lath and plaster and plasterboard (assumed)
- Walls: Finished with a gypsum plaster
- Floors: Ground Floor: A suspended timber floor to the main property and a concrete floor the rear (assumed)
- First Floor and Top Floor: Joist and floorboards (assumed)



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

# **ACCOMODATION AND FACILITIES**

## **Ground Floor**

The ground floor accommodation comprises of:

- Through Lounge
- Kitchen

## **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation comprises of:

- Two Bedrooms
- Bathroom

## **Top Floor**

The top floor accommodation comprises of:

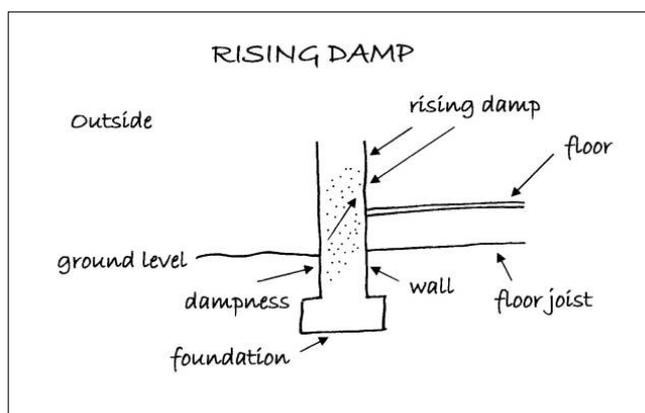
- Bedroom

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Before we start the Executive Summary we would just like to give you an introduction to Rising Damp and Lateral Damp.

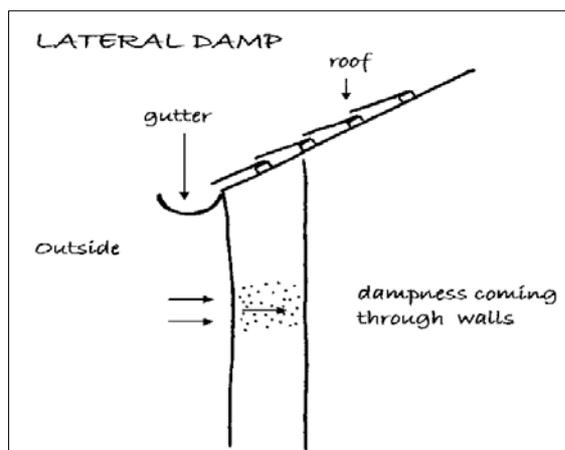
### Rising Damp

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.



### Lateral Damp

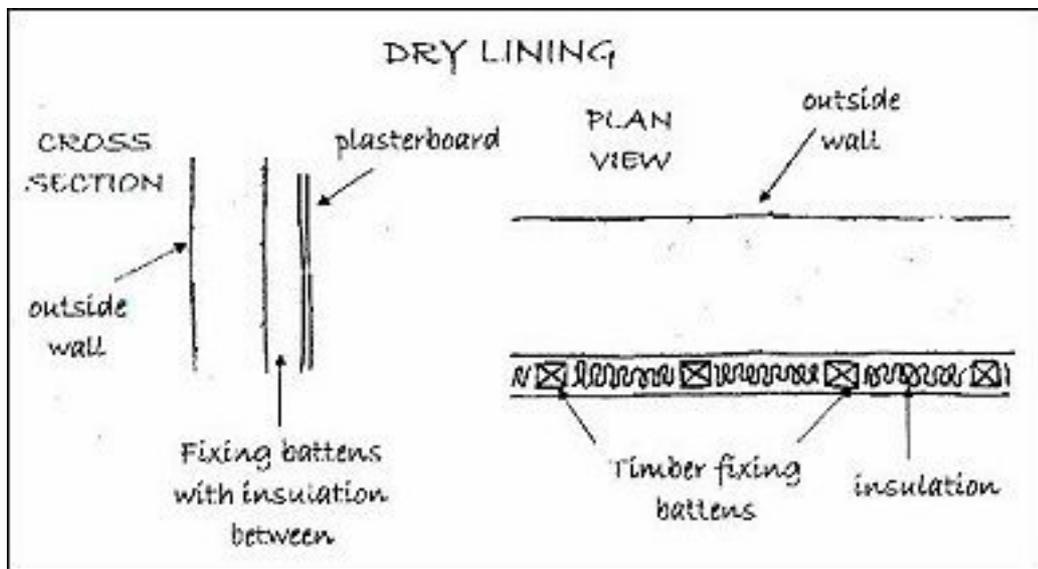
This is where water ingress occurs through the walls. This can be for various reasons such as poor pointing or wall materials or inadequate gutters and downpipes, such as poorly jointed gutters.



Rather than our usual Executive Summary we feel in this instance it is important for you to look at the options you have available, particularly considering the property will be rented out in the near future.

## Hide the Effect of the Dampness

One option is to hide the effect of the dampness, which can be carried out in several ways. A technique often used in basements is to have a false wall in front of the present wall with a plastic sheet (usually patented) which allows any dampness that does surface to travel down the wall; this then would have a drain which moves the water to the outside. Depending upon the amount of water that you have seen in this area (remembering that we have not seen this section when it has been raining) it may be possible and sufficient to carry this work out without a drain, but you do need to discuss this with the manufacturer. This, as we discussed, will mean that the kitchen units will need to be amended to have a gap of typically between 75mm and 150mm.



An alternative solution is to simply hide the dampness and offer no option on how the dampness gets out by cladding the wall. As we discussed some type of Perspex sheet of approximately 5mm thickness could be used behind the kitchen units with some type of cladding above it.

Neither of these will solve the 'cause' of the problem but they will hide the effect of the problem for a period of time. The period of time depends upon how bad the dampness is and the weather conditions.

## **Solve the 'Cause' of the Dampness**

The difficulty of solving the 'cause' is that it is a combination of effects including:

- Rising damp
- Lateral Damp

### **Rising Damp**

We have taken electronic damp meter readings and found rising damp in the area on the internal wall (the right hand side of the kitchen as you face the property from the front).

Our initial thought is to add a damp proof course; however your adjoining neighbour has had this work carried out (more years ago than she could remember) by Rentokil and she still has dampness on her side. Such a treatment would normally work on both sides, but it has not worked on either.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would nevertheless recommend that the plaster is removed, ideally on both yours and your neighbour's side and a new damp proof course is added, ideally from both sides. The removal of the plaster will allow the wall to breathe.

**ANTICIPATED COSTS:** Whilst you do need a quotation we would expect costs to be in the region of £2,000 - £4,000 for yourself and your neighbour to have this work carried out, depending, of course, on the amount of plastering and the amount of damp proof coursing required; although we would initially just be looking at this right hand kitchen wall.

We would then allow a period for the wall to dry out.

### **Walls – Old Defective Pipework**

When the plaster has been taken off the wall we would also recommend a metal detector is used on the wall to establish if there are any old pipes within it that may be discharging water. We believe this may be a possibility as you used to have a washing machine in this area, as did the neighbouring property, which will have had a water supply pipe. The pipes will need to be cut out and completely removed.

Another way of checking for pipework is also to open up a small section of the ceiling to see if there are any within the first floor.

We believe that an old defective pipe is only a remote possibility, but nevertheless it has to be checked for.

### **Drains**

Another issue which may be adding to the rising damp is if the drainage is leaking. The drainage runs to the rear of the property and your neighbour has had problems with the drains in the past, which she believes have been repaired, but may in turn have transferred the problems to your side of the drainage.

We believe the only proper way to test this out is to carry out an air test on the drains, to see if they are leaking (if they are leaking air then they will be leaking water), together with a close circuit TV camera report to see if there are any cracks in the drains and water is contributing to dampness in the area.

We have included this as we feel the level of dampness in the area is excessive and therefore due to a combination of factors, which the drains may be one of.

### **Chimney – Lateral Dampness**

If you recall we discussed the possibility of water coming down the chimney either via the pots or via defective flashing on the top (the cement bit that holds the chimneys in) or the chimney itself.

Having inspected the chimney this would appear unlikely; however we are always surprised where wind driven rain can get!

Ultimately, to resolve the possible problems, we need to look at carrying out work to the chimney.



Render to chimney in average condition

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that the chimney is capped (assuming that neither you nor your neighbour are using it).

Capping involves the adding of paving slabs across the top, ensuring that there is a suitable drip, and adding airbricks to vent the chimney to avoid dampness at roof level, at first floor level and at ground floor level.

### **Roof – Roof Flashings**

Both yours and your neighbour's flashings could be causing problems. Your flashing is a felt flashing and from its configuration the water could be coming in around this. Again, it is amazing how a little water causes a problem.



Felt flashing

Alternatively, to your neighbour's side there is a Flashband (trade name) flashing, which is a temporary repair material which also could be allowing water in down the parapet wall.

Having said that, on the right hand wall within the kitchen (the shared wall between you and your neighbour), we would have expected a more consistent reading of dampness than we got when we took high level meter readings within the rear bedroom.



Flashband repair to next door's roof

**ACTION REQUIRED:** The flashings need to be replaced with lead flashings. We do believe this is an outside chance of where the dampness is coming from.

## **French Doors**

You have dampness around the base of the French doors and the reveal. The correct solution would be to remove them, check the vertical damp proof course, reposition it if required, reinstall the French door with a rebate of approximately 50mm (2 inches), and add a drip over the door. But, as you are about to be renting the property, the practical solution would just be to add a drip over the door and to redo the mastic joints.

The rising damp in this area will have hopefully been reduced by adding a damp proof course.



Movement visible above the door – stepped diagonal pattern from the lintels. Also drip detail needs to be improved and / or the doors set within the frame and a vertical damp proof membrane added.

## **Costs Associated with the Options**

So that you can take an overview of which way to deal with the problems we would offer the following information:

### **Hide the Effect of the Dampness**

#### **A False Wall with a Drainage System**

With a drainage system we would expect costs to be in the region of £1,000 - £2,000, but quotations should be obtained. This is often a patented system that you have to buy from manufacturers with their recommended installers, which is why it can be pricey.

#### **A False Wall without a Drainage System**

Without a drainage system we would expect costs to be in the region of £500 - £1,000, depending upon the cladding that you have, and of course with both of these options you will need to renew in due course.

You will, of course, have to amend the kitchen units.

## **Solve the 'Cause' of the Dampness**

Assuming that you would have to carry out all the work we would expect costs to be in the region of £5,000 - £10,000, depending upon the extent of the problem.

## **Recommendations**

Taking into consideration that you will be renting the property we would recommend a false drained wall system. There will be additional costs associated with altering your built in kitchen units.

You also, during the course of the survey, asked us to comment on other areas of blown plaster and / or dampness. Predominantly these are to the left hand side wall and we believe they relate to the flat roof that discharges down the wall rather than into the gutters, or has done in the past and possibly still does on occasions when there is heavy rainfall.

We are not certain that a satisfactory detail can be obtained to the flat roof due to the falls on it. Please see our further comments in the next section.

**Time Line – A brief history of the structure**

Late 1800s	Property built
Circa early 1990s	Next door has drainage problems
2003 / 2004	Kitchen refurbished

# INSPECTION

Within the section we look in more detail giving our thoughts behind our Executive Summary.

We have carried out a visual inspection of the property and made checks with an electronic damp meter in the areas specified as having dampness.

All directions are given as if facing the property from the front, with your neighbours to the left hand side and neighbours to the right hand side.

## Kitchen

### Left Hand Side Wall of the Kitchen

We found a mixture of rising damp and penetrating damp with minor lateral dampness to the left hand side wall. Our readings may have been distorted slightly by the pipework within the wall (you advised us it was a hot water pipe) but we believe there is an element of lateral dampness coming down the left hand painted wall which we believe relates to the gutters above and the poor flat roof detail.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** To solve the problem completely a new drip detail would need to be added to the roof. We believe the only way to carry this out properly is to use a lead roof detail which would involve re-roofing the entirety of the roof, which would be good as you could add a proper fall to it, but expensive. We also feel that the guttering may have to be realigned to ensure it is catching all the rain.

## Floor

The kitchen floor has minor rising damp, which we have found not only in your kitchen but in the neighbouring kitchens as well. We therefore believe that the original concrete flooring has been laid either without a damp proof membrane or with a damp proof membrane that has deteriorated.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** The only way to solve this properly is to take the floor up and add a new damp proof membrane, which is a very messy job and would involve removing all the kitchen units etc. However, the level of dampness is relatively minor at present and in the future will result in some 'blown' tiles; we feel it would be easier to repair these than to resolve the problem because you also need to establish the 'cause' of the dampness and whether it is just a missing damp proof membrane or whether it is a leak from the nearby drains.

If you recall we lifted your neighbour's drains and also discussed with them the problems they had had with the drains in the past.

Your manhole cover was not lifted.



Next door's drains.

We could see that these have not been lined.

### **Right Hand Side Wall of Kitchen**

The right hand wall has dampness and our readings indicate that it is both rising damp and from your description also dampness affected by the chimney. Please see our specific comments relating to the chimney.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Inserting the damp proof course would be the obvious thing to recommend, however next door has already tried this without success. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

## Rear Wall / French Doors

We detected rising damp to the rear walls and also lateral damp to the wall around the French doors.



Rising damp to the French door



Dampness coming in via the frame.

## Ground Floor

### Suspended Timber Floor

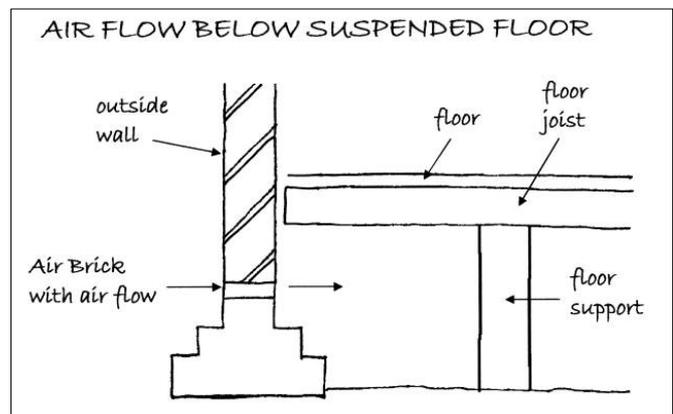
The airbricks to the rear are blocked and partially blocked to the front.



Blocked airbricks to suspended timber floor

### Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined

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



## Water Table Level

The water table level is the water level within the ground. Generally it is accepted that this is rising. As such it is putting pressure on ground floors and walls and this could also be contributing to the problems on the ground floor kitchen area.

## First Floor Rear Bedroom

### Left Hand Side Wall

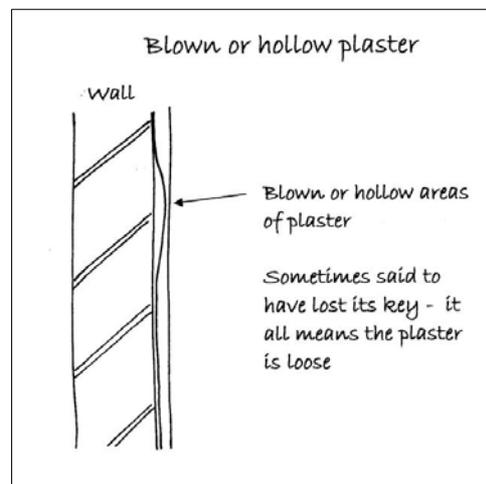
Blown plaster, particularly around the built-in cupboards, is likely to be from rainwater discharging from the roof to the gutter above. Please see our comments with regard to this in the ground floor section.



Blown plaster to left hand side wall

### Blown Plaster Defined

This is where the plaster has come away from its base leaving a hollow area.



## **Right Hand Side Wall and Rear Wall**

We noted some minor blown plaster, probably typical for this age of plaster.



Minimal dampness to rear wall

## **First Floor Bathroom**

### **Left Hand Side Wall**

We noted signs of water penetration to the left hand side wall, which we believe relates to the poor roof detail.

There is diagonal cracking to the bathroom wall. We have spoken about the mixing of materials below. This is always difficult to resolve. We have found that a mastic or pliable filler is best in these cracks, then, of course, you need to resolve the water coming down the outside of the wall.



Diagonal cracking to bathroom wall

## **Flat Roof**

The flat roof has a mineral finish and is flat (flat roofs should have a fall of approximately 12°, which we don't think this roof has).

We also noted that the decking to the flat roof is flexing. Recently the Flat Roof Association advised about cheap imported decking from China, which this may be part of. We noted that there was no ventilation to the roof, which it should have under current Building Regulations and we were not able to establish if there is any insulation within it.

However, we can say that the drip detail to the left hand edge (all directions given as you face the property from the front) encourages the water to travel down the wall. Also, from the moss and lichen patterns we can see that water is discharged in certain areas off the flat roof. We would literally have to be there when it is raining heavily to be able to

establish exactly where the water is going, but from the blown plaster in the first floor bedroom and the blown plaster in the bathroom we would suspect it is travelling down in this area.



Small lip to the parapet wall at the end of the flat roof does not resolve the problem of rainwater discharging down the length of the left hand wall. A proper drip needs to be formed.



Edge of your flat roof



Close up of your flat roof



Neighbouring roof that has a better drip detail



Close up of neighbouring flat roof

## **Materials Used**

The property has a mixture of the old original construction materials, which are likely to be brick and lime and a lime mortar plaster, and the more modern materials that have added, such as the paint externally and the gypsum plaster and paint internally; the two different types of materials react differently, particularly where there is an element of dampness, as there is in this case.

## **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:

There are a lot of factors to consider with regard to the dampness. Ultimately we believe that you should focus on what you intend to do with the property and the standards you wish to set and are happy and comfortable with, which broadly range from hiding the 'effect' of the dampness to resolving the 'cause' of the problem.

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

Independent Chartered Surveyors

Independent Chartered Surveyors

Marketing by: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk)

0800 298 5424

# **LIMITATIONS**

## **Specific Defects Report**

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

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

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

Based upon a visual inspection as defined below the Surveyor will advise the Client by means of a written report as to his opinion of the visible condition and state of repair of the specific problem or problems only. In this instance relating to the dampness to the rear right hand side of the kitchen wall.

### **2. The Inspection**

#### **a) Accessibility and Voids**

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

#### **b) Floors**

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

#### **c) Roofs**

The Surveyor cannot inspect the roof in this instance due to the loft conversion that has taken place.

#### **d) Boundaries, Grounds and Outbuildings**

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

#### **e) Services**

No services inspected.

f) Areas not inspected

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

g) Specific Defects Report

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

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

**3. Deleterious and Hazardous materials**

- a) Unless otherwise expressly stated in the Report, the Surveyor will assume that no deleterious or hazardous materials or techniques have been used in the construction of the property. However the Surveyor will advise in the report if in his view there is a likelihood that high alumina cement (HAC) concrete has been used in the construction and that in such cases specific enquiries should be made or tests carried out by a specialist.

**4. Contamination**

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

**5. Consents, Approvals and Searches**

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

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

forthcoming we will make our best assumptions based upon the information available.

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

## **6. Fees and Expenses**

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

## **7. Restrictions on Disclosures**

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

## **8. Safe Working Practices**

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

# APPENDICES

Independent Chartered Surveyors

Marketing by:

[www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk)

0800 298 5424

# **DEFINITIONS**

## **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.

## **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.

## **Condensation**

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