

COMMERCIAL BUILDING SURVEY

OF

An Modern Office



FOR

Mr A Office

Prepared by:

GEM Associates Limited

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

www.1stAssociated.co.uk

0800 298 5424

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INTRODUCTION

Firstly, may we thank you for your instructions; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property.

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 building's services. We conclude with the section for your Legal Advisor.

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

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

SYNOPSIS

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

This is a modern two-storey property, which is an extension to the original high street properties. From our discussions with adjoining property owners / tenants, there is no parking around the property (your Legal Advisor to confirm).

We believe that the property was originally built in the 1980s. If the exact age of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

External

Main Roof:	A pitched roof clad with manmade slates (there may be some natural slates hidden from view) with various valley gutters.
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic profile.
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic.
Walls:	Brickwork in a stretcher bond pattern.
External Joinery:	Double glazed sliding sash timber windows and painted timber fascias and soffits.

Internal

Ceilings:	Foil-backed plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	A mixture of Solid and studwork with a gypsum plaster finish (assumed)
Floors:	<u>Ground Floor:</u> Concrete (assumed). <u>First Floor:</u> Joist and Floorboards (assumed).

Services

We believe that the property has a mains cold water supply with heaters for the hot water, drainage and mains electricity, which supplies an electric central heating system (assumed).

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.

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front View



End View



Rear View

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ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

Ground Floor

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- Entrance Lobby
- Internal Kitchen (no windows)
- Office Accommodation

First Floor

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- Stair Assess with half Landings
- Landing
- Separate Male and Female W.C.s
- Office Accommodation

Outside Areas

During the course of our survey we were asked to move our car (although we had sought permission from one of the neighbours) and also several times we were blocked in. We would reiterate our earlier comments that you need to specifically seek legal clarification as to what you own and do not own and what you have rights of access over, and also where you can park. We also recommend that you have discussions with the existing neighbours prior to purchasing the property to establish their understanding and their willingness to work within the bounds of requirements.

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



Ground Floor Office Accommodation



Internal Kitchen

First Floor



First Floor Office Accommodation

REPORT FORMAT

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

PHOTOGRAPHS



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area.

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.

MARKET VALUE

We have not been asked to comment upon the market value in this instance. We have not seen copies of the trading figures or the accounts. We did note that the Estate Agent's details mentioned an investment income from the property which is likely to be from an historic rent still being paid. We can look into this further for you if you so wish or you can ask your solicitor to clarify.

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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summaries are dangerous as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs. This is particularly so in a summary about someone's future business 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 30 plus photographs during the course of this survey and many pages of notes, so if a comment has not been discussed that you are interested in/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. Having said all of that, here are our comments:

Generally we found the property to be in average condition for its age, type and style. However, it appears to have a few fundamental issues that will considerably affect its value and usefulness. The Executive Summary incorporates our overall recommendations. We have divided this 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!

- Within walking distance of the town centre.
- Modern construction.

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

The Bad

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

1) **Overflowing Hopper Head**

The hopper head is overflowing and discharging down the wall. This really needs to be seen when you next have a good downpour of rain. Also check to make sure it is your rain that is going into the hopper head!



ACTION REQUIRED: Probably a larger hopper head.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £500 - £1,000, as we believe one may have to be purpose made.

Please see the Gutters and Downpipes Section of this Report.

2) **Hairline Cracking**

Throughout the property there is hairline cracking where movement has occurred for a variety of reasons. These reasons range from the differential movement that is occurring between the studwork, the solid walls and the ceilings which is also being added to by movement in the structure, to the hairline cracking in the kitchen area which appears to be from the point loading of the staircase above.



Hairline cracking to the ceiling.



Hairline cracking to the walls.

ACTION REQUIRED: Fill and decorate, but expect the cracks to re-emerge periodically.

ANTICIPATED COST: In the region of £1,000 - £4,000, depending upon the amount of re-plastering / redecorating required.

Please see the Internal Walls Section and the Internal Decorations Section of this Report.

3) Close to Hot Food Operations

This is more a statement of fact than something you can do anything about. You need to be happy that you are willing to operate in close proximity to this type of business, which will mean regular deliveries, usually late night openings and in our experience can block the drains with the grease that is used; although the drains were free flowing at the time of our inspection.

The Ugly

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

4) Parking!

We have spoken to the surrounding neighbours with regard to the parking and they have advised that there are problems with parking that have involved court proceedings, costs were mentioned of £35,000 and £70,000 respectively in regard to legal cases to establish who has rights of access and who has rights to park.



ACTION REQUIRED: You need to establish and be certain of your access rights and parking. Our understanding, from the discussions we have had, is that there is no parking or vehicle right of access to this property. You need to confirm and clarify this and make certain that you are happy to live with this.

Please see the Outside Areas Section of this Report.

5) Excessive Deflection to First Floor

We were surprised by the amount of deflection in the first floor and we noted twisting in the roof timbers above, which does indicate the lintels (that we believe are steel) that have been used are not suitable for the loading required. In practical terms this will mean that you will not be able to have too many loaded filing cabinets in the room, particularly to the centre.

In the course of our survey we had informal discussions with the Buckinghamshire Housing Association who advised that there had been tenants at the property and it had taken some years to move them due to what in their eyes were problems associated with the property; this information of course was passed on to us in strictest confidence and we would ask that you do not pass it on. We were advised that they opened up the floor and found the timbers to be twisted.

ACTION REQUIRED: Firstly assess your requirements for the area, open up the floor and amend to meet these requirements. This could include adding a larger lintel, replacing the joists or adding noggings or herringbone strutting between them to make the floor more rigid.

ANTICIPATED COST: This depends upon the amount of work required, however the work is awkward and we would make an estimate, and you do need to get quotations, in the region of £10,000 - £20,000. (Please note that we are providing an estimate here on something we literally cannot see).

Please see the Flooring Section of this Report.

6) Fire Regulations

We noted that the current fire equipment was not up to standard.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need to obtain quotes from a fire servicing company.

ANTICIPATED COST: We would expect the cost to be fairly small, in the region of £500 - £1,000.

Please see the Other Matters Section of this Report.

7) **Disability Access**

You should be aware that it is now a requirement to give reasonable access for the disabled and make reasonable amendments to the property as is necessary to accommodate them. You have a step into the property and also your toilet facilities are on the first floor.

ACTION REQUIRED: This will involve preparing a 'plan of action' in line with the Disability and Discrimination Act.

ANTICIPATED COST: Not known, quotation required.

Please see our comments in the Other Matters Section of this Report.

Other Items

Moving on to more general information.

Maintenance

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

DIY/Handyman Type Work

We would normally recommend a DIYer/handyman to carry out day to day maintenance, however from what we could see in this size of office it will probably be easier to employ people as jobs occur.

Purchase Price

We have not been asked to comment upon the purchase price and we have not seen any of the books or accounts etc.

Every Business Transaction has a Risk

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

Estimates of Costs

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour. For unskilled labour we currently use between £50 and £75 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

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

SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

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

We feel the key issues are the parking and the floor; however we do feel you should be offered a discount on the price based upon the other issues noted.

As a general comment for any work required we would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion.

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

MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT

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

COMMERCIAL AGENTS / BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER – FRIEND OR FOE?

It is important to remember that the agents are acting for their client and not the purchaser. 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, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen and signed a copy of our terms of engagement please phone immediately.

OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION

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

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



The following part of the report has been written for the layperson and therefore includes introductory sections, definitions and photographs. We trust this will aid your understanding of the survey.

EXTERNAL

ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS

The Roof Coverings and Underlayers section considers the condition of the outer covering of the roof. Such coverings usually endure the extremes of climate and temperatures. They are susceptible to deterioration, which ultimately leads to water penetration.

The underlayer's function is to minimise wind and water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:

Main Roof

The roof is pitched and clad with manmade slates which should sit very flat and true, as they do in the areas we can see. However, as the Manmade slates are thin and light, the wind can catch them, so it is important that the slates are fixed at the perimeter and do sit flat. You need to check from time to time that the roof remains in this condition.

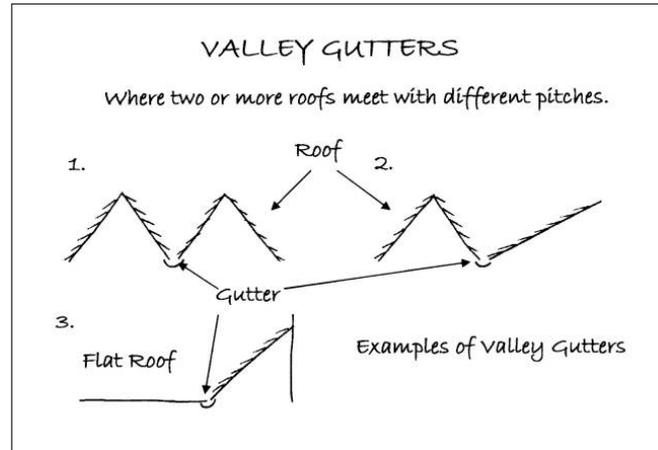


Manmade Slate or Resin Slate General Information

Manmade slates look similar to quarried slates but are made from reconstituted slate. The slate is bonded together in a similar manner to that used with chipboard. To the best of our knowledge it has been available for 30 or so years. Its characteristics are that it is thin, light and cheaper than quarried slate.

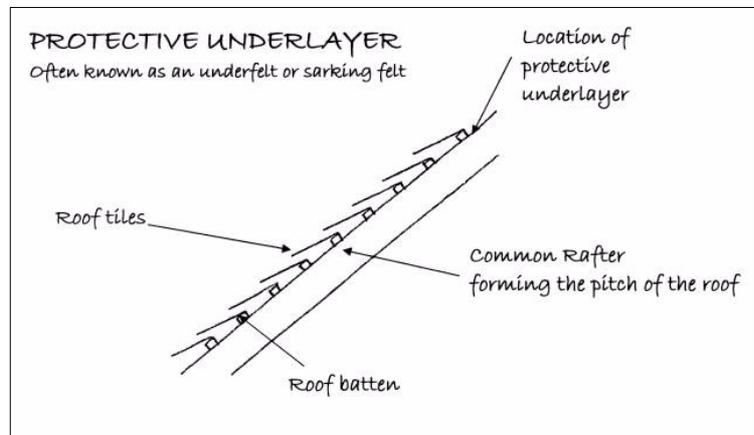
Valley Gutters

Valley gutters occur where two roofs join and these are generally considered weak areas. In this instance we would comment that they look to be metal, possibly lead, although often replacements are used in newer buildings such as this. We look to check that they are not blocked or that there aren't any cement fillets (the bits at the side of the valley gutter) coming loose. From what we could see they all looked to be in average condition.



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.



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, although it is damaged in a few places but this is not unusual considering its age.

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



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

Unfortunately we were only able to see approximately 70 percent of the main roof from ground level via our ladder or via any other vantage point that we managed to gain. We have made our best conclusions based upon what we could see, however a closer inspection may reveal other defects.

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

ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT

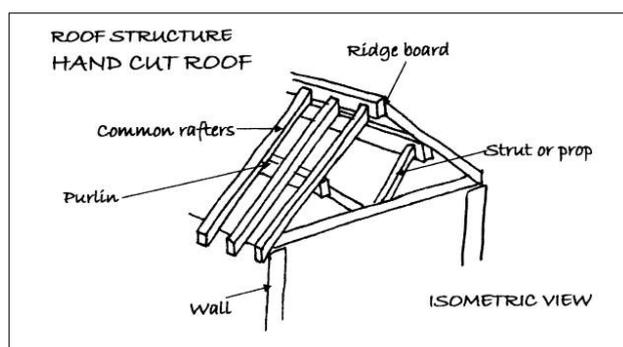
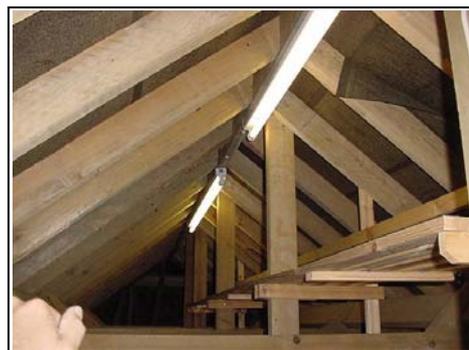
(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)

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

Main Roof

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located on the Landing. There is no loft ladder, but it does have an electric light and is partially boarded throughout. The loft perimeter has been viewed by torchlight which has limited our viewing slightly.

This type of roof structure has what is known as a modern cut timber roof. This is a roof that is purpose made and hand built on site. This type of roof was the most common until the 1970s when manufactured roofs became more economical. Without the original design details we cannot categorically confirm that there are no defects, however this is in line with what we commonly see.



Roof Timbers

We found the roof timbers generally in reasonable condition, with the exception of a few twisted joists, which we believe relates to the defective flooring, which we have mentioned in the Executive Summary, which has been transferred through the structure. As you can see in the adjoining photo one of the common rafters has split. Ideally this should be replaced, but in this instance we would leave it as to replace it would be very difficult. When you have rectified the cause of the problem it should not be a further issue.



Slit joist, possibly due to movement in the structure.

Generally we have inspected the roof structure for serious active woodworm and for structurally significant defects to the timber together with dry rot and wet rot. Our examination is usually hindered by the general configuration of the roof and the insulation. What we could see we generally found to be in an average condition considering its age. It is, however, feasible that there are problems in the roof that are hidden.



If you look closely the red 'I' beam is a steel lintel/joist running through the structure. There is likely to be a similar one where the office has been opened up.

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

Fire Walls

In this instance the firewall is built in brickwork and is the original rear wall to the older front properties.

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



Water Tank

There are no water tanks in the roof, indicating that all water is directly feed.

Ventilation

We could see some ventilation in the roof space, this will help reduce condensation and is a requirement of current Building Regulations and is generally considered good building practice.



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 they are hidden from view by the insulation, so we are unable to comment.

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

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

GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

Gutters and Downpipes

From ground level the gutters and downpipes looked to be plastic and appeared in reasonable condition, with the exception of the hopper head that is leaking and discharging down the wall. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



There may be some other minor leaks, but we feel that most people could live with these.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would always recommend that the gutters and downpipes are cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes. This is a DIY / handyman type job.

Soil and Vent Pipe

We could see a plastic soil and vent pipe. Generally the waste pipes and soil stack appear to be satisfactory where a surface inspection is possible, although for the most part they run in ducts and cannot be inspected.

Finally, gutters and downpipes and soil and vent pipes 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.

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.

Brickwork

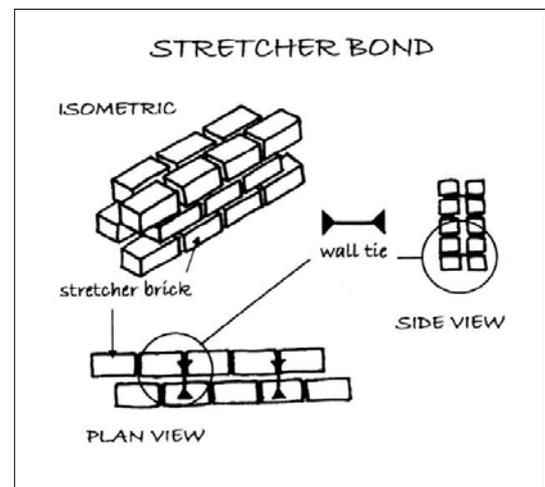
The walls are built in brick and bedded in cement mortar in what is known as stretcher bond brickwork.

In the adjoining photo we have identified a movement joint (providing it is there), which is the correct practice for a modern wall.



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".

We generally found the brickwork and pointing in average condition.



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 concrete lintels or metal lintels are common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

Our comments have been based upon how the brickwork / plasterwork has 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.

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.

As the property is relatively new, it is reasonable to expect Building Regulation approval to have been gained (your Legal Advisor should check this). Since 1948 the Local Authority has been tasked to check that the property is built to Building Regulation standards. Originally a depth of about half a metre was required and this increased to 0.9 of a metre. In 1979 foundation depth was increased to 1m - 1.2m following problems with foundations said to be due to our warmer weather.

Given that the property's age and type, we would expect to find a strip concrete foundation, as these are generally used as both quick and economical.

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.

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

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

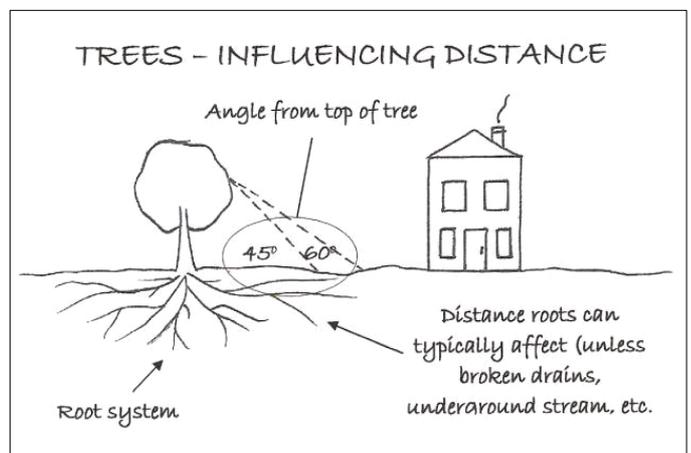
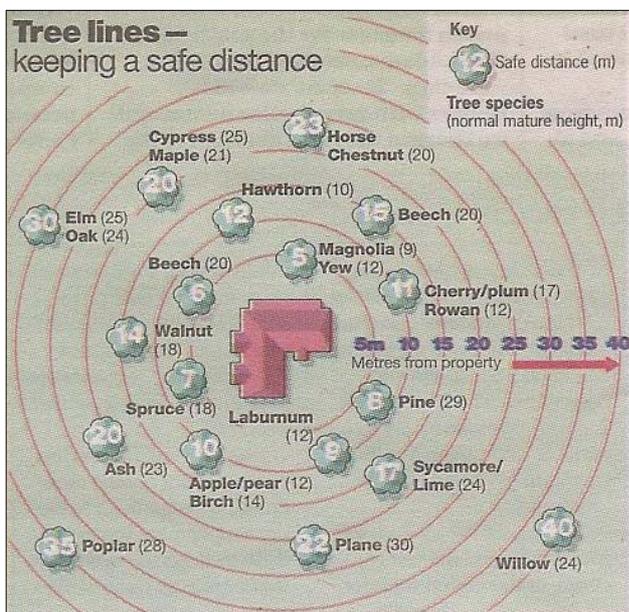
TREES

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

There are no trees within influencing distance of the office.

Influencing Distance Defined

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



Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

DAMP PROOF COURSE

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

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, as the property is relatively new (last 30 years in this case) we would expect to find a plastic damp proof course, often known by its trade name of Hyload, as can be seen in the adjoining photo.



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

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.

EXTERNAL JOINERY

The external joinery part of this section covers fascias, soffits and bargeboards, 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 fascia is hidden behind the guttering in this instance so we cannot see it, although we can see the soffit that is painted timber, it is common for this type of detail to have some deterioration to the timber. We noted that the paint to the windows is peeling and therefore it is likely that some redecoration is required.

Windows and Doors

You have modern double glazed sliding sash windows. The paint is peeling on some of them and they would therefore benefit from redecoration in the next few years.

ACTION REQUIRED: Redecorate in the next few years.



ANTICIPATED COSTS: In the region of £1,000 - £2,000 with some minor repairs.

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

EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

Overall we would consider the paint / stain work in average condition, however we would redecorate in the next few years.

Finally, ideally external redecoration is recommended every four to five years dependent upon the original age of the paint, its exposure to the elements and the materials properties. Where painting takes place outside this maintenance cycle repairs should be expected. Ideally redecoration should be carried out during the better weather between mid-April and mid-September.

Please see our comments in the External Joinery section.

INTERNAL

CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

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

Ceilings

We noted in the loft space that a foil-backed plasterboard has been used. These are generally used to try and reduce condensation occurring into the loft space and are a relatively modern idea that has not as yet undergone the test of time.



With this type of construction hairline cracking is possible, which is not uncommon in plasterboard. This will need filling in due course and we suggest you use a filler that allows for movement, although we would add that where plasterboard sheets join, cracks may open up again.

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.

Internal Walls and Partitions

We have carried out a tap test to the internal walls (this is not rocket science, it is literally tapping the walls and listening for the sound made) and found them to be a mixture of solid walls and hollow/studwork walls.

Generally it is a reasonable assumption that the solid walls are likely to be made from brickwork / blockwork and will be the structural walls, with the studwork walls being purely to divide the rooms.

We noted that structural alterations have been carried out within the office areas. Such works should have been completed to the satisfaction of the Local Authority Building Inspector in accordance with the requirements of the Building Regulations. This is a major issue within this report and you do

need to investigate further as it could be costly.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary, particularly those relating to differential movement.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor should confirm the aforementioned. If no Consent has been granted, further investigation is necessary to establish whether the work has been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

Perimeter Walls

Generally internal walls are finished with a modern plaster believed to be carlite / gypsum plaster and decorated. Without the removal of the decorative finish we cannot be 100 per cent certain, this type of plaster is used in most modern properties.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary regarding cracking.

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

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

FLOORS

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

Ground Floor

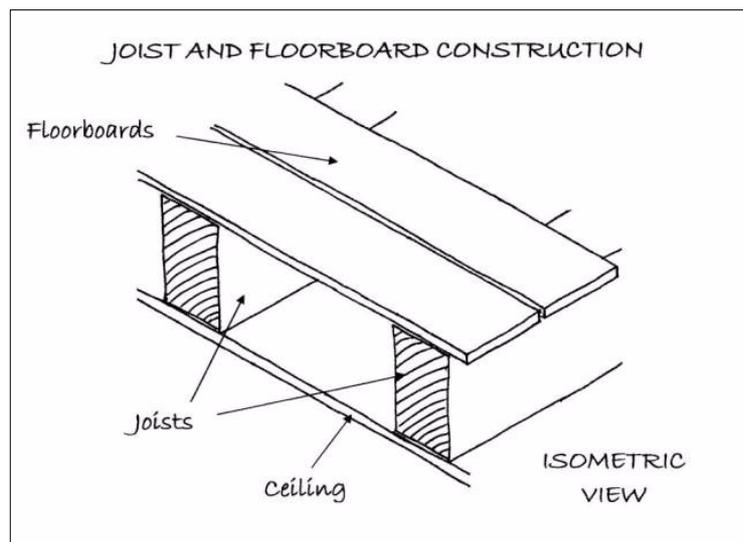
The floors felt solid and firm underfoot so we have assumed they are formed in concrete, however, we have not opened up the floors or lifted carpets.

First Floor

We have assumed that the first floor construction is joist and floorboards, 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.



We noted excessive deflection. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. We have not opened up the floor, but we do feel that it has an above average level of deflection; it is certainly more than we typically see. This can be for many reasons, from under sized timbers to lack of lateral restraint, to wet rot and woodworm. In this instance we feel it is likely to be due to the undersizing of the lintel and the timbers and the lack of lateral restraint.

We have checked the roof timbers directly above this area and found some twisting and splitting in one of the common rafters.

Please see our comments within the Executive Summary and the Roof Structure Section of this report.

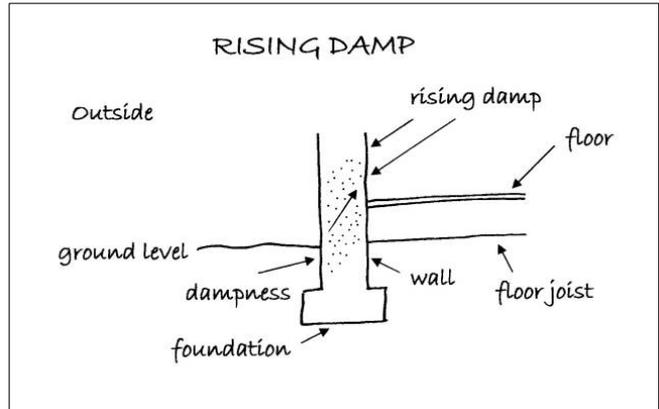
Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with fitted carpets and floor coverings. The comments we have made are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction. We would emphasise that we have not opened up the floors in any way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

DAMPNESS

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

Rising Damp

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

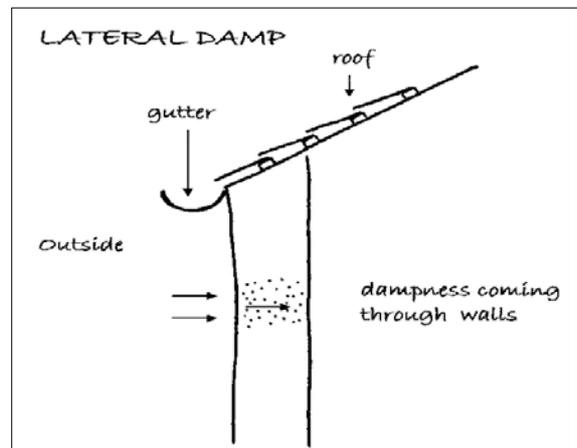


We carried out random tests with an electronic damp meter and no evidence of any significant rising dampness was detected in the random areas checked.

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.

Tests were taken with a moisture meter at random points to internal walls, floors and other surfaces. No evidence of any significant penetrating/lateral dampness was detected.



Condensation

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

We can see no obvious signs of condensation, however, it depends upon how you utilise the building. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating and ventilation of properties. Normally opening windows first thing in the morning resolves most condensation issues.

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

INTERNAL JOINERY

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

Doors

The property has Veneer doors and, all things considered, they are in reasonable (although not ideal) condition and fit acceptably.

We noted that some of the doors have fire door closers, known by the tradename of 'Perco' door closers (see the right hand side of this photo). When you have your check carried out by a fire services company they will need to pick up whether any door closers require maintenance or whether any need adding.



ACTION REQUIRED: Door closers and doors to be checked by a fire services/maintenance company.

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 plaster gives a resistance to the spread of fire if such circumstances were to occur.

Kitchen

From our cursory visual inspection the kitchen looked slightly dated, and it has suffered from some general day-to-day marks. We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances. It is not to the standard of the rest of the property.

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.

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.*

In the areas inspected no evidence was found of any significant dry rot and we feel it is unlikely that it is occurring, given the conditions found.

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.*

In the areas visually inspected no evidence was found of any significant wet rot.

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 significant woodworm activity or, indeed, signs of past woodworm activity that has caused what we would term ‘structurally significant’ damage. In many properties there is an element of woodworm that is not active. Our inspection is usually restricted by insulation covering some of the timbers and general stored items in the roof, as it is restricted throughout the property by general fixtures and fittings.

ACTION REQUIRED: If you wish to be 100 per cent certain that

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there is no woodworm the only way would be to check the property when it is empty of fixtures and fittings, etc.

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

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

INTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

The decoration is as new, but our concern here is what latent defects are being hidden by the paint work. We noted hairline cracks to the plaster. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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.

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.

Roofs

Some roof insulation was present, although not to current Building Regulation requirements of 270mm. We would not be overly concerned about this as we typically find in roofs between 100mm – 150mm of insulation. In this instance you have approximately 150mm.

Walls

The property has a stretcher bond construction, we can only assume from the age of the property that it is likely that it included cavity insulation. Without opening the wall up we cannot be certain.

Windows

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

Services

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

Summary

Overall, considering the properties age, type and style, it has average thermal properties.

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

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

or alternatively: www.cat.org.uk

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

OTHER MATTERS

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

Security

No security system was noted. It is a personal decision as to whether you feel one is necessary. We are not experts in this field and therefore cannot comment further. We suggest you contact a member of NACOSS (National Approval Council for Security Services), obtainable through directory enquiries, or your local Police Force for advice on a security system.

Smoke Alarms

No 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 that 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 have seen recently a smoke detector that fits within a light fitting (although we have not used these personally), which is charged when the light is switched on, providing it is switched on a certain number of times a year. We feel this is an excellent idea as it alleviates the problems of batteries running out. We would also advise that if you wish to have any general advice the local Fire Authority are usually happy to help.

Fire Regulations

We do not believe that the building currently meets Fire Regulation standards. This opinion is based upon some of the fire extinguishers not being identified and the lack of good 'Fire Exit' signage.

ACTION REQUIRED: Your Legal Advisor needs to confirm whether there is a Fire Certificate in place or a record of maintenance.

Disability Discrimination Act

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Asbestos Register

Although we did not see any asbestos, and it is unlikely to have been used in a property of this age, we do have a duty to advise you that it is now a requirement for any public building to have an asbestos register, indicating whether there is or is not asbestos and if so where it is.

A Type Two Survey should be carried out under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. We are not asbestos surveyors.

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.

SERVICES

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

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

ELECTRICITY

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

The electric fuses and consumer units were located in the services cupboard. We would date the fuse board as being from the 1980s and, whilst not the best now available, is reasonable.



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



ACTION REQUIRED: If there is no record of an electrical test having been undertaken within the last five years, it is recommended that the installation be tested by a competent electrician (NICEIC registered) and all recommendations implemented. Thereafter, the installation should be re-tested every five years.

All extract fans need to be cleaned.

Also note that current Building Regulations require certain electrical work to be certified by an approved contractor. Please see the appendices at the end of this survey for further details.

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 be established in case of bursts or leaks. The stopcock and other controlling valves have not been inspected or tested for operational effectiveness.

Water Pressure

When the taps were run to carry out the drainage tests we checked the pressure, literally by putting a finger over the tap, and the pressure seemed typical of what we find. 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!).

Heating

We noted that there are Electric radiators, which may not warm the property to the heat that you desire. In most modern installations double panel radiators (heated from a gas boiler) are used and often double panel convection radiators, which are more efficient.

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.

MALE AND FEMALE W.C.s

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

The property has slightly dated W.C.s, which has been subject to some day-to-day wear and tear and look in below average condition. You may wish to upgrade the sanitaryware. We also noted that the male W.C. is rather small.

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 sinks etc. We normally recommend that it is one of the first jobs that you carry out as part of your DIY on the property, as water getting behind sanitary fittings can lead to unseen deterioration that can be costly, inconvenient and difficult to repair.

MAIN DRAINS

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

We assume that the property has the benefit of mains drainage and 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.

We have run the cold water taps in the kitchen for 10 minutes, without any build up or back up.

Inspection Chambers / Manholes

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

We have identified one manhole and one inspection chamber We have duly lifted these to check to make sure they are not blocked.

Inspection Chamber – Front Right Hand Side

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



Manhole – Right Hand Side Middle

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

From what we could see it is brick built.



Please see our comments in the Executive Summary about drains getting blocked with grease from restaurants etc, which you have close by.

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

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

Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage

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

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

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

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

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

OUTSIDE AREAS

Parking

As far as we can ascertain you don't have any parking rights. You need to establish what your rights of access are.

Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

ACTION REQUIRED: You need careful considered legal advice on this matter. We are more than happy to discuss this further.

Neighbours

We spoke to your left hand neighbours who are Buckinghamshire Housing Association.

Your neighbours directly behind did not answer the door at the time of our inspection.

We spoke briefly to the fast food outlet who advised that they are tenants.

We spoke to the Central Detective Agency, who is well worth talking to as he has been in the property for many years.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend a personal chat with each of your neighbours.

POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

If you wish to proceed with your purchase of the property a copy of this 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) Cavity wall insulation and cavity wall tie repairs.
 - iii) Double glazing / replacement windows.
 - iv) Roof and similar renewals.
 - v) Central heating installation.
 - vi) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
 - vii) Any other matters pertinent to the property.
- d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.
- e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.
- f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.
- g) Adjoining roads and services.
- h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.
- i) General development proposals in the locality.
- j) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.

- k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or are likely to exist beneath the curtilage of the site upon which the property stands and which could affect the quiet enjoyment, safety or stability of the property, outbuildings or surrounding areas.
- l) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use and no investigations have been made in this respect.
- m) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) Most Legal advisors will recommend an Envirosearch or a similar product is used by you to establish whether the area falls within a flood plain, old landfill site, radon area etc. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of Envirosearch or similar please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them of it. Any general findings should be brought to their logical conclusion, by using appropriate specialist advisers.

However, with regard to Envirosearch or similar general reports please read: www.1stAssociated.co.uk/leaderboard.asp

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

LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES

When you booked this survey we asked you if you required us to carry out a verbal check on the status of the property with the Local Authority regarding whether it is a Listed Building, in a Conservation area and any history that is available over the phone with regard to Planning Applications and Building Control. In this instance you have not requested that we carry out this work.

Finally, your Solicitor should carry out any Local Authority checks and any additional enquiries he/she feels necessary, advising us if they feel that we can have further input.

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

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

For and on Behalf of
GEM Associates Limited
Independent Chartered Surveyors

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 4th edition published by Royal Institution of
Chartered Surveyors Books.*

House Builders Bible

By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press

APPENDICES

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LIMITATIONS

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

As per our original Terms of Engagement, we would remind you specifically that:

We have not inspected parts of the structure that were covered, unexposed or inaccessible during our inspection. We therefore cannot confirm that such parts are free from defect, structural or otherwise.

We have not determined whether any hazardous materials such as high alumina cement, calcium chloride, asbestos etc have been used in the construction.

Our report is for the use of the party to whom it is addressed above and no responsibility is accepted under the Third Parties Act or for any third parties who use this report in whole or in part.

We have not carried out a comprehensive test of any electrical, mechanical or drainage services. We therefore cannot confirm that they are operational and in good condition. If you wish us to arrange tests please advise.

We have not carried out or arranged for specialists to undertake any reports, for example an environmental report or an audit report upon the property. We are therefore unable to advise whether any contaminated or other adverse environmental issues affect the site.

ENGLISH LAW

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

SOLE USE

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

ONLY HUMAN!

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

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

WEATHER

It was a mild summer's day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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.

EMPTY PROPERTY

The property was empty at the time of our survey; we were therefore not able to carry out our usual question and answer session or have our questionnaire filled out.

INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been limited due to the fact that we have not opened up the first floor, so we could not establish the extent of the issues.

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 properties and surrounding grounds in England and Wales must follow new rules in the building regulations. All significant electrical work carried out in the property 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 insurance policy at risk.

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

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.
2. A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the building regulations.

Work You Cannot do Yourself

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

INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

www.landreg.org.uk

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

www.rics.org.uk

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