

**RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY**  
**OF**  
**The Square, London**



**FOR**  
**MR T**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Firstly, may we thank you for your verbal instructions of 24 April 2003; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property. This Survey was carried out on 26 April 2003 and 14 May 2003.

The Building Survey takes the following format, there is an introductory section (which you are currently reading) and includes a synopsis of the building and a summary of our findings, we then go through a detailed examination of the property starting with the external areas working from the top of the property down, followed by the internal areas and the buildings services. We conclude with the section for your Legal Advisor and our final comments.

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 house 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 for whatever reason and call our office to discuss the matters further on 0800 298 5424.

We obviously expect you to read the entire report but we would suggest that you initially look at the summary, which refers to various sections in the report which we recommend you read first so that you get a general feel for the way the report is written.

As part of our service we are more than happy to talk through the survey as many times as you wish until you are completely happy to make a decision. Ultimately, the decision to purchase the house is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

# **REPORT FORMAT**

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

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

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

## **TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED**

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

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**



We utilise photographs to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area (with this property we have taken approximately one hundred photographs in total and we have enclosed a sample of these within the report).

## **ORIENTATION**

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

## **ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

Your proposed purchase is situated on the first floor of a three storey (with basement) terraced property. The property is situated within a Georgian square with a central communal area (which we believe includes a play area and five a side football). We would classify the property as being Georgian in what is known as the neo-classical style.

From our informal investigations we have discovered that Milner Square was built in 1841 to the design of Alexander Gough and Robert Roumieq.

The building would probably originally have been built as one complete unit with the servant and service areas being located on the ground floor and the occupants living on the upper floors. It was common for example for them to have their lounge on the first floor where this flat is situated.

We believe that the buildings were then purchased by the local authority and converted into their present configuration. Many owners have bought off the local authority through the 'Right to Buy' scheme.

The Square is situated close to Upper Street, which has local shops and amenities, including bars and restaurants. Underground links are available at the Angel on the Northern Line and Highbury and Islington Railway Station with the A1 and A40 road links close by.

## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



Rear Elevation



Garden – Looking away from the property



Garden – Looking towards the property

# **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

## **EXTERNAL**

- Chimneys: Not visible, believed to be brick built. (Assumed)
- Main Roof: Again not visible, but believed to be a slate covered butterfly roof. (Assumed)
- Rainwater Goods: To the rear of the property a plastic hopper head and downward pipe are visible.
- Walls: Flemish bond brickwork with render to the first floor level (assumed).
- External Joinery: Painted sliding sash windows.

## **INTERNAL**

- Ceilings: This age of property would have originally been built with lath and plaster ceilings, unfortunately we have no way of confirming this. (Assumed).
- Walls: Stud work and some solid walls (assumed).
- Floors: Joist and stripped floorboards (assumed).

## **COMMUNAL AREAS**

Entrance hallway and stairs and a garden to the rear of the property – we have not seen a lease - exact details should be set out within the lease identifying communal areas and your responsibilities and liabilities.

**The above is explained in full in the main body of the Report along with the technical terms used. We have used the term assumed as we have not opened up the structure.**

# **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

## **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- Small Entrance Hall/Corridor
- Double Size Bedroom
- Store
- Internal Bathroom
- Lounge
- Kitchen – access through the lounge

## INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Please note that some of the photos may have been taken with a concave lens, to enable us to show you as much of the room as possible, which does make the photos slightly blurred.



Lounge



Kitchen



Bedroom



Bathroom

## **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 home when we are trying to second-guess what their priorities are, so it is important the Report is read in full. Having said all of that, here are our comments:-

We can see no major structural issues with regard to this property, we have however highlighted some maintenance and neighbourhood issues which we feel should be considered.

### 1) **Roofs**

In this age of property the roofs are likely to be coming to the end of their useful life. Unfortunately we were not able to access the roof – the neighbour in 10c was unhappy to give us access and we were unable to view it from surrounding properties – but from our knowledge of this age, style and type of property we would expect a slate butterfly roof with a valley gutter.

Please see our full comments within the Roofing section of this report.

### 2) **Noise Transfer**

From our discussions with your neighbours we believe there may be a problem with regard to noise transfer between the flats. This comes about because these properties were not originally designed to be divided as they have been, and also the rooms no longer having carpets in them which deadens the noise transfer.

Please see our comments within the Internal section and in the Other Matters section of this report.

### 3) **Communal Areas**

The state of the communal areas and who re-decorates, re-wires etc. From discussions with one of your neighbours no works appear to have been carried out for the past seven years to the best of their knowledge.

We refer you to our comments within the Communal Areas section of this report.

### 4) **Heating not working properly**

Whilst we only had the heating on for a short while, some of the radiators would appear not to be working properly. Therefore you should allow for a service of these together with the boiler. Common problems with radiators not working normally relate to the valves which will need replacing which will involve draining down the heating system which may be easier said than done.

Please see our comments within the Services Section of this report.

### 5) **External Decoration**

To prevent deterioration of the windows, exterior decoration should be carried out. The sooner this is carried out the better.

Please see our comments within the External Decorations Section of this report.

There are various other things which we feel we should draw to your attention. Some of these relate to the layout of the building, which is often problematic in a converted property, such as the water closet and boiler within the bedroom that we find are generally noisy. Some of them relate to the age and style of property such as the draughts that come through sliding sash windows. And some of the relate to the joys of living in a multi-occupied building such as the signs of an old leak from your bathroom to the ground floor ceiling, which you may be asked to pay for re-decoration of this area. These and other things we have gone into more detail within the main body of the report, which we recommend, you read in full.

## **Specific questions**

### **Removal of Walls**

You asked specifically whether various walls could be removed.

This depends upon, to a great extent, what the neighbours above and below you have. Whilst we can identify whether they are solid, i.e. brick walls – usually structural, or studwork/timber walls – usually non-structural. Without access to the other flats, particularly the upper flat, we cannot be 100% certain which walls can be removed. If you can gain us access to this flat we would be happy to return and comment further.

Probably the easiest way to discover is to apply for the landlord's consent to remove the walls because no doubt you will require this under the lease agreement and, at the same time, you can ask them about the configuration of the apartments below and above you.

### **Asbestos Water Tank**

Whilst ideally this should be removed, there are many of these still in existence and indeed, unless they are starting to deteriorate, they are generally not considered a health hazard at all.

### **Maintenance**

Your Legal Advisor needs to confirm exactly what maintenance is and is not carried out under the terms of the lease and who is carrying it out. We have rung but had no luck to date. We suggest you give us a call once you have read the whole of this report as we may by then have been able to find the right person to talk to.

### **Purchase Price**

We have not been asked to comment upon the purchase price in this instance, however due to the very uncertain nature of the market we do recommend you take advice on this matter. We have included general literature within this report to help give you an indication of the market. We would be more than happy to give you specific advice for an agreed fee if you so require.

## **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.

## **Final thoughts**

Please also see our comments in the Summary Upon Reflection, which is the next section of this report. These comments were added after we had reviewed this report whilst still in a draft format.

## **SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION**

The Summary Upon Reflection is a second summary so to speak, which is carried out with our thoughts a few days after the initial survey. We would add the following:-

The main area of concern is to establish your responsibilities and your landlord's under the terms of the lease and if they anticipate any major works, for example to the roof, in the near future. Your legal advisor should be asked to clarify these matters.

We would also draw your attention to our concern about property values that seem to be generally falling in this area. We would suggest that you negotiate hard on the price, particularly bearing mind there is a certain element of risk that you are taking on in the form of future repairs, and also from what we have found to date, a fair amount of aggravation in regard to getting any of the repairs carried out.

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. If you so wish we can prepare specifications and obtain quotations for the work, whatever you do don't allow the estate agent to organise the quotes as he will utilise people he regularly uses who know they have to keep in with him/her to get further work and therefore are very keen to please the estate agent, as opposed to you the real client and at the end of the day it doesn't take long to organise.

We would ask that you re-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.

### **TENURE**

We have assumed that the property is to be sold Freehold and that vacant possession will be available on completion. Your Legal Advisor should confirm that this is the case.

### **IS THE PROPERTY MARKET GOING UP OR DOWN?**

We have not been asked to provide an open market valuation for you on this property or a worth value. We do, however, feel it is essential to understand when and if you are buying the property at the right level we have therefore for your information attached extracts from recent press reports on the state of the housing market.

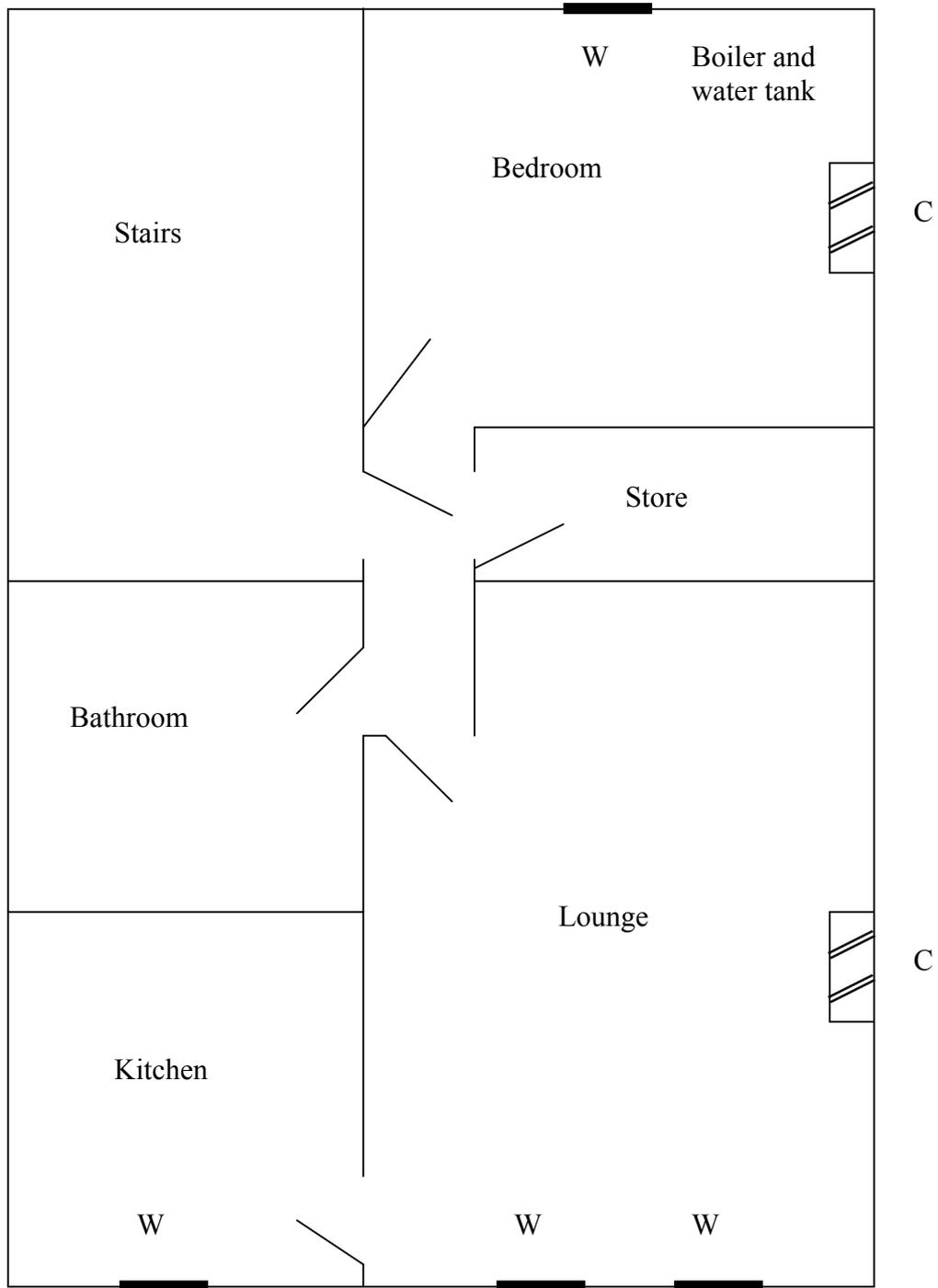
### **ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?**

Finally, it is important to remember that the estate agents are acting for the seller (usually known as the vendor) and not the purchaser and therefore are eager to sell the property (no sale – no fee!). We as your employed Independent Chartered Surveyor represent your interests only.

### **TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

Just a reminder that all this Report is being carried out under the terms of engagement that we have recently received back from yourselves.

Garden



**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

Not to scale

Key

W = Window

C = Chimneybreast

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## **EXTERNAL**

# **CHIMNEY STACKS AND PARAPET WALLS**

### **Chimney Stack**

Although it could not be seen we believe there is a single chimney stack to this property on the right hand side. This is based upon us being able to see the chimney breasts within the subject flat.

The chimney sits on what is known as a party wall and therefore falls under what is known as the Party Wall Act and therefore permission will be required should any works be required to it.

The main issue with these is what other occupants have done with their chimneys, as sometimes in a multi occupied building, such as this, they can be removed. However there is no sign of this from the part of the chimney we could see within your apartment.

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

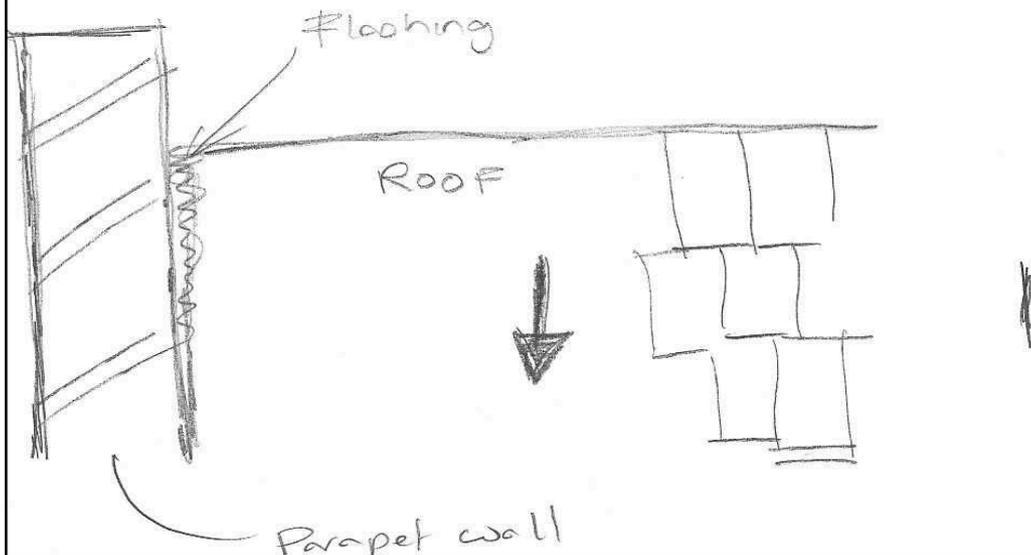
A structure which both parties enjoy the use of or benefit from. An example of this would be where both parties gain support from a wall or utilise a chimney or chimneys.

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

### **Parapet Walls**

To the front and rear of the property are parapet walls, which are common in this style of property. Whilst we have not had access to the roof, a typical parapet wall detail in this age of property would be as follows:

# Parapet Wall



As you can see the roof is not visible, but you can see from the parapet walls the differing conditions they are in, which in turn indicates work may have taken place behind them.



Indeed in one part of the parapet wall there is plant life growing out of it, although not, I am pleased to say, anywhere near your property.

## Parapet Walls Defined

These walls are usually above the roof line and often sit on the boundary of the property. Due to their position they are relatively exposed and suffer from deterioration due to the elements.

Finally, we would reconfirm that we have been unable to view the chimney stacks and we have only been able to see the facing brickwork to the parapet walls. These have been inspected from ground level within the boundaries of the property and from the public highway/rights of way with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. Therefore our observations are limited.

Please also see the Chimney Breasts, Flues and Fireplaces Section of this Report.

### **Wrought Iron**

To the front of the property are small wrought iron balconies, unfortunately only big enough for a planter. Metal railings may well form part of your landlord's responsibilities under the lease.



Some minor rusting was occurring to the wrought iron.

## **ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERFELTS**

*The roof coverings and underfelts 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.*

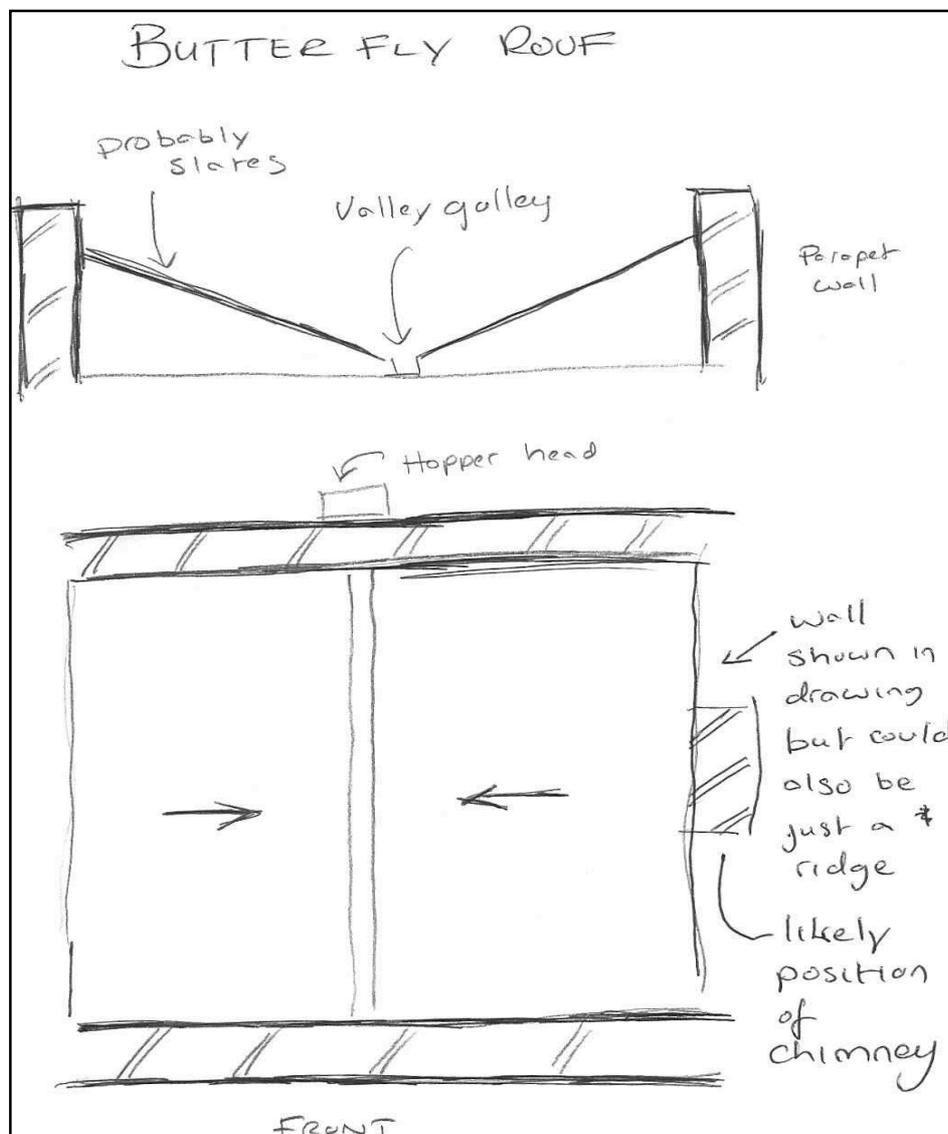
*The underfelts function is to prevent wind and minimise water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:*

As already mentioned we were unable to see the roof covering but there are various indicators to allow us to give an educated guess as to the type of roof structure and roof covering this property has. In this age of property we would typically expect either a slate or a tile roof covering. From our experience we believe that this property is most likely to have a slate roof. The next paragraph gives a brief history of the use of slates.

*Slate has been commonly used as a roofing material in many areas, particularly where it was available as a natural resource. It was towards the end of the Georgian period, that slates tended to supersede the use of tiles in most parts of the country becoming very predominant during the Victorian age. This was partly due to improved transport systems which made slates readily available to those that wished to use them and partly due to fashion. Slates continued to be used up until the end of the 19th Century.*

We believe that the roof is in a configuration known as a ‘butterfly roof’ or a London roof – as they are very common in the London area.

A sketch of a butterfly roof is set out below:



We have come to this conclusion due to the position of the rainwater goods to the rear of the property, which are positioned centrally and is common for this type of roof.

Unfortunately as we have not seen this roof we cannot comment upon its condition other than to say that a slate roof typically has a life of 100 years and this roof is coming to the end of its economical life unless it has been replaced or repaired during that time.

### **Valley Gutter**

A very common problem with this type of roof is the central valley gutter which more often than not leaks. We are concerned that this is a liability that you will have to take on as well.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would very strongly recommend that the landlords are contacted by your solicitor to confirm what recent work has been carried out to the roofs and when they anticipate they will need replacement as this will be a very costly exercise.

### **Adjoining Roofs**

We would normally comment on the adjoining roofs as these can effect the condition of your roof. However, unfortunately we cannot see them in this instance.

### **Sarking Felt**

We have not been able to gain access to the roof therefore we cannot comment upon the presence of sarking felt or otherwise. We would expect a roof of this age not to have a sarking felt if the original construction is still present.

Finally, we would reiterate that we were not able to see the roof or indeed adjoining roofs.

## **ROOF STRUCTURE AND ROOF VOIDS** **(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.*

We were unable to gain access to the roof void or view the roof externally. We would be happy to return subject to access being agreed and arranged with the owner of 10c Milner Square.

## **RAINWATER GOODS**

*Rainwater goods is the term given to the rainwater gutters and the rainwater downpipes. Their function is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.*

*Defective rainwater goods 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.*

### **Replacement Plastic**

To the rear of the property the rainwater goods can be seen. We could see plastic hopper head and down pipe. This is grey and looked to be relatively old as it has faded (modern plastic does not fade/degrade in the same way from ultra violet light). It is likely that originally this property would have had a cast iron or lead down pipe.

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.

It is quite common with this type of rainwater goods arrangement for the hopper heads to overflow during periods of heavy rainfall, but this is only likely to affect the top apartment.



A close up of the hopper head, you can just see the lead around it which helps prevent damp.

### **Valley Gutter**

Although we have already mentioned it, we would re-emphasise the valley gutter that feeds the water to the aforementioned rainwater down pipe is very susceptible to leaking. It is usually originally formed in lead but this can over the years be replaced or repaired with felt and Bitumen. Again, as already stated, as we have not seen it we cannot comment upon its condition.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** It is essential that the condition of the valley gutter be established prior to legal completion to purchase this property.

Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected from ground level. We were not able to make a close inspection of the roof level rainwater goods (our ladders are not long enough) and therefore cannot be 100% certain of the type of material used or the condition. 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.*

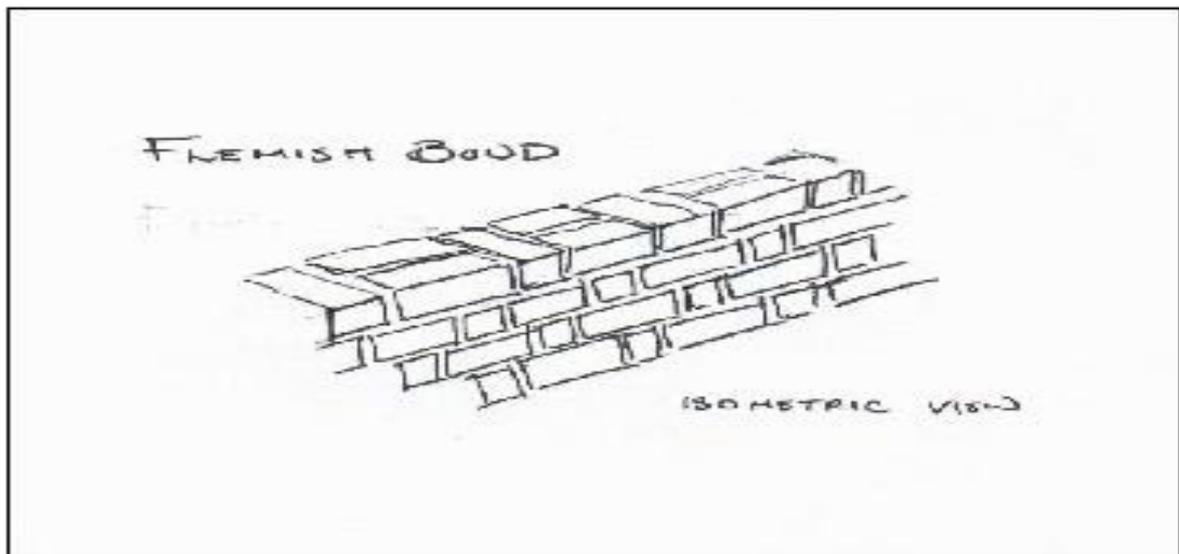
### **Brickwork Detailing**

Predominantly this property is built in a yellow stock brick. It is bedded originally in lime mortar and has been re-pointed in cement mortar. The brickwork bond is Flemish. The ground floor level has a painted render finish as is common in many late Georgian properties.

With regard to the brickwork, the term Flemish bond brickwork relates to the way the bricks are bonded together. We are only able to see the outside of the brickwork. In some instances, tradesmen would imitate this pattern with a single skin of brickwork, bonding a cheaper brick on the inside, thereby saving money/increasing profits and reducing structural integrity. This is rare, however the only way to be 100% certain is to open up the wall.

Generally Flemish Bond brickwork is liable to penetrating dampness internally, dependent upon the condition of the brickwork and the exposure to the weather. In this case the level of dampness in the property was in keeping with this age, style and type of property.

It is essential external faces are kept in good condition.



### **Lime Every Time**

Unfortunately the re-pointing, whilst well meaning, is not appropriate for this type of construction. A cement mortar has been used rather than a lime based mortar. We recommend that you use a lime-based mortar in any future repairs regardless of what the builders say! They will often not recommend the use of lime mortar because they are not skilled enough to actually utilise this particular material. Using lime mortar, however, will limit damage to the brickwork which is almost impossible to repair successfully.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Future repairs to be carried out in a lime mortar.



Re-pointing in a cement mortar.



The wall to your property would appear to have been cleaned.

#### Lime Mortar Defined

A mix used to bed bricks upon; its characteristics being that it flexes and moves with the structure. It was used up to the War years.

#### Cement Mortar Defined

A sand cement mix used commonly in brick houses from about the First World War onwards and is relatively strong and brittle and therefore does not allow much movement.

### **Render**

Whilst the painted render area is to the Ground Floor only, we feel we should comment that there are some cracks within it. These are what we would term as hairline and are relatively common for this age, type and style of property.

#### Render Defined

A sand and cement external coating applied in two or three coats or layers.

### **Lintels**

Where the window and door lintels are concealed by brickwork/render/plaster we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels or metal lintels are common which can be susceptible to deterioration which is unseen particularly if in contact with dampness.

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and randomly via a ladder within the boundaries of the property.

## **FOUNDATIONS**

*The foundations function, if suitably designed and constructed, is to transfer the dead or superimposed load through the soil so it can suitably carry the loads. Many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or not foundations, as we now think of them, with a minimum depth of around one metre filled with concrete.*

Typically, with a Georgian property of this period, if we excavated around the foundations, we would expect to see a stepped brick foundation. However it is simply not possible to tell without excavation.

We have inspected the walls for any signs of movement and found nothing untoward.

### **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, no examination has been made of any foundation to the building because to do so requires extensive excavation. We therefore cannot confirm 100 per cent the stability of the walls the foundations support but we have drawn conclusions from the surface evidence available at the time of the inspection and our general knowledge of this type of construction.

Likewise, we cannot comment upon how the foundations are constructed, we can only offer you our best assumptions, which we duly have done.

## **TREES**

There are no trees within influencing distance of the main house.

### Influencing Distance Defined

This is the distance in which a tree may be able to cause damage to the subject property.

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

## **DAMP PROOF COURSE**

*Damp proof courses were not generally added until the Building Act of 1878 required them. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout the Country.*

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) to minimise dampness. 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, damp proof course really only relates to those on the ground floor and will not effect your apartment. However, from our discussions with your ground floor neighbours, we are aware that there is dampness and the properties generally have a problem with dampness, particularly at basement level. We are concerned that this may be a responsibility through part payment of yours within the terms of your lease.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your solicitors are to advise you specifically upon your responsibilities in relation to any dampness within the property as a whole.

If you do have a liability this could prove very costly.

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

Finally, it is often not possible to inspect or even identify if there is a damp proof course in a wall, although sometimes the edge of the damp proofing can be seen. Very often the exact position is covered with mortar or render and is not visible. We have made our best assumptions based upon our findings during the course of this inspection.

## **EXTERNAL JOINERY**

*The external joinery part of this section covers windows and doors, and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.*

*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.*

### **Windows**

#### *The London Acts of 1709 and 1774*

We can see from the way the window is recessed that it was built after the 1774 Act came into being (we have been advised that they were built in 1841 and this is in keeping with that advice).



The close up of the sash windows indicates that some repair work may be necessary as well.

A bit more information about *The London Acts of 1709 and 1774*:

*Both these acts relate to alterations of the windows to prevent fire. The 1709 Act required all window frames to be set back 100mm (4") and the 1774 Act required that all window frames should be set into reveals leaving only a thin strip visible externally.*

If you have not lived in a property with sliding sash windows previously, you should be aware that typically they are draughty and rattle. There is no easy way to eliminate this problem. In our experience, a general ease and adjustment of the windows and the addition of a plastic tube draught sealer (available from most DIY stores) and regular redecoration is the best option to minimise the draughtiness of the windows in this case.

We were able to open the windows in the lounge and found these both to be replacement windows but, nevertheless, in need of redecoration. We were also able to open the window in the bedroom; again this is in need of redecoration.

The window in the kitchen needs a general overhaul as the sash cord is missing and we feel this is an area that should be vented.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Overhaul sliding sash window. Likely cost £100 - £200.



The windows are in need of redecoration



The rear window was particularly bad

## Doors

We know we are getting repetitive, but again, the responsibility for redecoration and repair to the doors should be established.

We note that the frame has been repaired and the paintwork is now flaking. The way the framework has been repaired has been to place timber over the top of what we suspect is rotten timber. Although not a big job, the difficulty in these types of properties is who should pay for it?

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Again your solicitor needs to confirm who is responsible for what.



The base of the door frame is in need of re-decoration. See our comments within the report.

Finally, a general and random selection

and inspection of the windows and doors and any exposed timbers, has been made visually to give an over-view of the general condition. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

## **EXTERNAL DECORATIONS AND COMMUNAL AREAS**

*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.*

In this case, redecoration is obviously required to the communal areas and the external areas, particularly the windows would also benefit from it.

The difficulty is who is responsible for carrying out such work, and will it ever be carried out and the repercussions if you, as tenants, decide to carry out the work yourselves.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor should check the lease to establish responsibility and any associated costs.



Minor rusting to the rear metal Fire Escape.

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

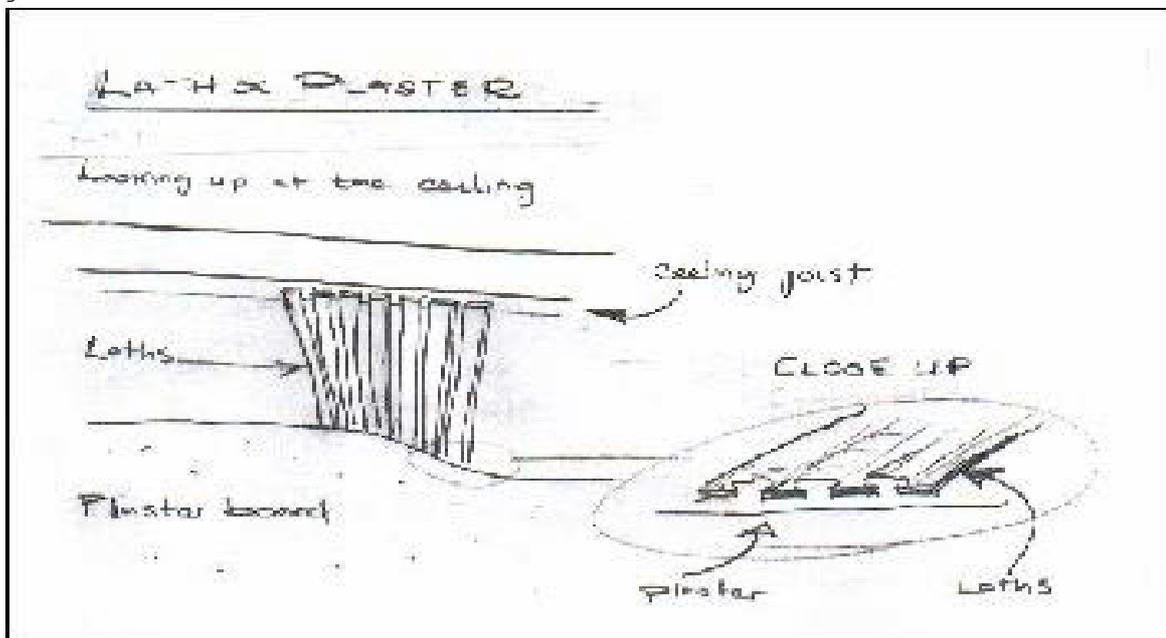
*In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions. The concept of internal finishes is relatively modern. Partitioning developed originally to separate the livestock from the human occupants. Finishes have developed from this very functional beginning to their decorative nature of today.*

### Ceilings

Given the age of the property we believe originally the ceilings will have been formed in lath and plaster. However the ceilings are reasonably smooth and leveller than we would expect for this type of ceiling. They therefore may have been replaced with plasterboard when conversion work has been carried out.

#### Lath and Plaster Defined

Laths are thin strips of timbers which are fixed to the structure. Wet plaster is applied to the laths, usually in several layers. The plaster forms a key as it is forced between the laths. This plaster, once dry, is given further coats and often a decorative finish.



Common defects with this type of plastering are that the laths are placed too close together or too far apart therefore the plaster cannot form a key. It can also deteriorate due to dampness within the structure, general vibrations, structural movement and age.

#### 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.

Plasterwork from the pre-1930s was usually made of lime, sand and very little cement if any, and incorporated Ox, horse, cow or goat hair to strengthen the finish. Failure can arise for many reasons. As we have not opened up the ceiling or walls, we cannot express an opinion as to how long they are likely to last. However, visually they look in reasonable condition.

### **Internal Walls and Partitions**

We believe that the flat may have been re-plastered internally, as we would expect a lime base plaster, similar to that described in the Ceilings Section, and this to be slightly damp and blown. The random sample of wall that we tap tested in this property indicated that the key to the plaster was still reasonably good, indicating a replacement of the plaster.

We also tap tested the internal walls and found these to be studwork in quite a few cases, indicating that the walls can be removed.

#### Blown Plaster Defined

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

#### Studwork Defined

Usually a timber frame, clad in either lath and plaster or plasterboard and used to divide areas. Studwork can be structural, i.e. load bearing, or alternatively non-structural depending upon its construction. Within more modern properties, a proprietary metal system or a honeycomb cardboard may also be found. Modern Building Regulation requirements also require minimal sound transfer and this is usually adhered to by the incorporation of insulation.

Finally, ceilings, walls and partitions have been inspected from floor level and no opening up has been undertaken. The type of materials employed cannot be ascertained fully without damage being caused.

## **CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES**

In the lounge and bedroom the chimney breasts are visible, together with a concrete hard standing that is the old fireplace. It is unlikely that these chimneys are now usable as they are often used for ducting within the building and, of course, we have no way of knowing the condition of the chimney at the top.

We are pleased to see a vent in both the bedroom and the lounge chimney, which stops dampness.

## **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.*

### **First Floor**

The floorboards are exposed which, whilst making a nice feature, unfortunately means that noise is transferred much more easily to the flat below, this was mentioned by your downstairs neighbour.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Insulate in one way or another the flooring.

There are two ways to resolve this. One is to put insulation between the joists; this will involve lifting up the floorboards and adding insulation. It may be difficult to put the floorboards back down as they were once they have been lifted (we also noted that they had been filled with a plastic wood, which makes them doubly difficult to get back down). Again you would probably require the landlord's permission to carry this work out.

The other alternative is to add a carpet with a good underlay to stop noise transfer. This would have the benefit of pacifying the downstairs neighbours and allowing you to be able to make more noise without being heard!



This shows part of the floor and also the old concrete surround.

The bed is on the right hand

side.

08 5424  
ES NATIONWIDE

### 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.

## **DAMPNESS**

*In this section we look at any problems that are being caused by dampness. Dampness is one of the most common problems in older properties such as this.*

### **Rising Damp**

Rising damp generally causes problems to ground floors as it is dampness rising from the earth, which normally rises to a maximum of a meter or so. Obviously with your apartment being on the first floor this will not effect your property.

However, as you are purchasing a lease property you may have responsibility for dampness problems on the ground floor. When we discussed this with your downstairs neighbour, they commented that the properties have extensive dampness problems.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor should make crystal clear what your responsibilities are in relation to this matter.

## **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 material, inadequate rainwater goods or corroded downpipes.*

Tests were taken with a moisture meter at random points to internal wall surfaces. The readings were in line with what we would expect for this age, style and type of property.

## **Condensation**

We can see no obvious signs of condensation, however, it depends upon how you utilise the building. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. 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.

We would however comment that you have an internal bathroom and this area can cause a lot of condensation. We suggest that you get the fan cleaned, although the room does benefit from having high ceilings.

## **INTERNAL JOINERY**

*This section looks at the doors, the stairway and the skirting boards.*

### **Doors**

As this is what is known as a multi-occupied building, there are various laws and requirements relating to fire protection. One of these is that all doors should have door closers on them. We note that some of the doors have what is termed a 'Perco' door closer (trade name), some of them have had the door closer removed.

Whilst we appreciate that it can be a problem with the doors constantly shutting, we believe it is outweighed by the benefit of door closers stopping the spread of fire. We would suggest they are added.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Re-instate door closers.



Door closers missing

### **Staircase**

This sits in the communal area. As already mentioned several times, the problem is who pays for any work. We noted that items are being stored under the stairs. This is not an ideal location as, should a fire occur, it is your only way out.

### **Skirtings**

Painted timber skirtings in reasonable condition.

### **Kitchen**

The kitchen is fairly basic and one of the cupboard units looks to be falling to bits, although you could probably still live with it.

Finally, it should be noted that not all joinery has been inspected. We have taken 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.*

### **What is Wet Rot or Dry Rot?**

*Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi that initially need moisture to allow their airborne spores to germinate. Dry Rot can grow rapidly when conditions are good and if water continues to enter a building unchecked, wetting internal wood. Wet Rot can also spread throughout the timber in a property over a short period of time.*

### **Dry Rot and Wet Rot**

This type of property typically suffers from problems with dry rot and wet rot to the valley gutter. Unless we manage to gain access to the roof we will not be able to comment further.

### **Woodworm**

The roof space was not accessed. In the areas seen no woodworm was found.

## INTERNAL DECORATIONS

You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste. It is very difficult to advise on how frequently redecoration should take place. This very much depends upon the use and abuse the decoration gets, for example, within hallways this tends to be greater than for example within a spare bedroom.

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.



Whoever was painting appears to have lost interest in the painting just above head height!



You will have some ingrained grease to deal with.

## **THERMAL EFFICIENCY**

It is very difficult to comment upon thermal efficiencies in a building of this age and type. For example, many requirements of present Building Regulations, which cover thermal efficiency would not be appropriate to this type of structure as they are designed for modern buildings, which are constructed to different standards.

### **Roofs**

Not accessed.

### **Walls**

The walls to this property are solid. It is very difficult to improve thermal efficiency in solid wall construction without major alterations. These will usually affect the external appearance or reduce the internal space.

### **Windows**

As already mentioned sliding sash windows are draughty. We spoke to the present occupiers about this and they said it was cold in the winter months, particularly as some of the radiators never seem to get warm. Please see our comments later on.

### **Services**

The boiler in the bedroom was visually inspected and it was noted that the service record showed it was last serviced in 1995. A service is therefore overdue.

## **Summary**

Fairly average for this age, style and type of property. We would, however, comment as follows:-

We would advise that an energy rating is likely to be required for future house sales.

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**

### **Security**

We are pleased to see that the property has a door entrance system which seemed to be working satisfactorily from our experience of being let into the property.

### **Smoke Alarms**

No smoke detectors were noted. The current Building Regulations require that they are wired into the main power supply. Obviously in a property of this age, this is difficult as it would mean having surface mounted wires or cutting wiring into the plaster.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend, for your own safety, that smoke detectors be installed throughout the property. We would also advise that if you wish to have any general advice the local fire authority is usually happy to give advice.

We also recommend that you have a meeting of the entire household to ensure that they too have smoke alarms.

### **Insurance**

We would always recommend staying with the existing insurance company, 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 should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

## ELECTRICITY

The consumer unit is located to the left hand side near the entrance of the property. Ideally, we would recommend that a cupboard with a half hour fire protection casing is put around the electric consumer unit to restrain any fires that occur in this area and give extra time to evacuate the premises.

Visible wiring and fittings are of a modern type. 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.

We did note that the property tended to have single sockets. You may wish to increase these to double.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** An electrical test, if one has not been undertaken within the last five years, and possibly increasing the single power point units to double.



Exposed fuse and circuit boards.

## GAS

The gas unit is installed in a cupboard near the window in the kitchen and is a relatively modern one.

All gas appliances, pipework and flues should be the subject of an annual service by a competent engineer, i.e., a member of CORGI (the Council of Registered Gas Installers); works to gas appliances etc., by unqualified personnel is illegal. Unless evidence can be provided to confirm that there has been annual servicing we would recommend that you commission such a service prior to use to ensure safe and efficient operation.

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

## **PLUMBING AND HEATING**

### **Water Supply**

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

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.

### **Water Pressure**

When the taps were run to carry out the drainage test we checked the pressure literally by putting a finger over the tap and this seemed reasonable.

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!).

### **Cold Water Cistern and Hot Water Cylinder**

These are both located within a cupboard in the bedroom. Where we have seen this arrangement previously we have found that the tank re-filling or the boiler switching on and off can disturb a night's sleep. We spoke to the present owners about this who agreed and advised that sometimes the water tank seemed to take forever to fill, particularly late at night.

### **Plumbing**

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

### **Heating**

We asked for the heating to be switched on and had discussions with the owner who advised that the radiator in the bedroom very rarely got warm.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Overhaul of the heating system and service the boiler. We believe the boiler could be coming to the end of its useful life.

We recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

### **Soil and Vent Pipe**

No soil and vent pipe was noted externally so we assume it is internal.

## SANITARY FITTINGS

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

Slightly worn and dated.

It is important to ensure that the tiling and seals are properly made and maintained at the junction between wall surfaces and baths, showers etc., as damp penetration can lead to the development of fungal decay in concealed areas. This may not become apparent until a major attack has developed necessitating extensive and costly repairs.

## 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. Therefore the drains in a Georgian property will have been added at a later date. It is only in recent years that re-investment has taken place to upgrade the original drainage systems.*

We did not find any manholes within the perimeter of the building and were therefore unable to inspect these. We did have a discussion with your neighbours and neither of them mentioned any problems relating to blockages. Unfortunately there is very little else we can do. We did run the taps within the course of our inspection and there was no build up or back up during this time.

However, we did note that a leak appears to have occurred to the ceiling in the entrance hall, which looks to be coming from the bathroom above.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your Legal Advisor should confirm that this leak has now been repaired.



Ceiling in entrance hall showing leak mark.

It is

assumed that the foul drains from the

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

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**

We have been unable to determine the ultimate means of rain/surface water disposal. In this age of property it could either be a soak away or what is known as a combined drain where it feeds into your waste water drainage.

#### Combined Drains Defined

This is where drains are shared with neighbouring properties.

Please also see our comments within the Rainwater Goods section.

## **OUTSIDE AREAS**

### **EXTERNAL AREAS AND OUTBUILDINGS**

To the rear of the property there is a garden. This incorporates some bin stores and these looked to be fairly small. The ground floor neighbour advised that whilst it is a communal garden, very rarely does anyone tend it other than herself. We are advised that the garden gets the sun in the evenings.

There is a shed in the garden, which we did not establish the ownership of.

#### **Boundaries**

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

The left hand boundary is usually the responsibility of the subject property.

#### **Parking**

Parking in the area is very limited, we believe that one residential parking permit is allowed at £90 per year. The local post office workers parking cars in the area and therefore limiting available spaces unfortunately aggravate the problem.

#### **Rubbish**

It may seem a strange subject to talk about, but the lack of storage for rubbish and the lack of storage in these properties in general can be a problem. We noted that the bin stores were minimal and we were also aware that there is a fine in the area of £1000 for putting out any rubbish early. Bin day is believed to be Thursday.

## **Neighbours**

We have spoken extensively with the occupier of 10a, who seems reasonable and amenable, but concerned about the noise being transferred through into her apartment.

Unfortunately with 10c we had very little luck, although we are advised by the present tenants that he is no problem. We also spoke to the neighbours to the rear of the property in the newer development who advised that they found the area quite quiet. However, they were concerned about the amount of rubbish and parking in the area, in a similar manner to 10a.

We always recommend that you speak to your proposed neighbours prior to purchasing a property to ensure that you are happy with them.

## **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) Rising damp treatments.
  - iii) Roof and similar renewals.
  - iv) Central heating installation.
  - v) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
  - vi) 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 of the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) We strongly recommend that Envirosearch or a similar product is used by your Legal Advisor to establish whether this area falls into a flood plain, old landfill site etc., and brought to its logical conclusion. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of the system please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them about it.

## **LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA**

From our investigations the property has been identified as being a Grade II Listed building in a Conservation Area.

Your Legal Advisor should confirm the above and carry out any searches he/she feels are necessary.

## **PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL**

### Planning and Building Control

From our investigations with the Local Authority, the London Borough of Islington, we have found:

This property is a Grade II Listed building in a Conservation area. The London Borough of Islington are presently updating their records and were only able to access data to 1995, which did not show any outstanding enquiries.

This was confirmed by, a representative of the Planning Department at 2.35pm on 23 April 2003.

Your Legal Advisor should confirm this and carry out any checks he/she feels necessary.

Finally, an extract from the book “Sold”!

“When you receive your full structural survey (now known as a Building Survey) or House Buyers Report, do remember that you have requested a list of the property’s faults so it is unlikely to make cheerful reading. Every property has its faults but what you are looking for are the serious ones. If your Report does reveal a serious problem that you had not anticipated when making your offer, the first thing to do is to decide whether you want to take on the repairs if an adjustment is made to the price. If you do, then get quotes for the work as quickly as possible and present your case in a fair manner. Most people are reasonable under such circumstances and will compromise but inevitably there are those who are sufficiently confident of their position to say take it or leave it. In a very active market, prices may have moved up sufficiently to cover the extra expenditure in theory and the vendor will not hasten to point this out but remember that he has probably got a vendor pressing him to proceed quickly and starting with a new purchaser will cause him delay”

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! Please do not hesitate to contact us on 0800 298 5424.**

**For and on Behalf of**

**[Http://www.1stassociated.co.uk](http://www.1stassociated.co.uk)  
Chartered Surveyors**

**This Report is dated 14 May 2003**

## **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.*

# APPENDICES

# **LIMITATIONS**

Our limitations are as per our original Terms and Conditions of Engagement.

## **CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT**

The report has been prepared in accordance with our Conditions of Engagement dated 24 April 2003 and should be regarded as a comment on the overall condition of the property and the quality of its structure and not as an inventory of every single defect. It relates to those parts of the property that were reasonably and safely accessible at the time of the inspection, but you should be aware that defects can subsequently develop particularly if you do not follow the recommendations.

## **ENGLISH LAW**

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

## **SOLE USE**

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

## **ONLY HUMAN!**

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

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

## **WEATHER**

Finally, we would add that some defects only become apparent upon physical occupation or are only present as a result of the extremes of weather (which are becoming a more frequent occurrence). As you are probably aware the year 2000 was the wettest year on record and this may have adverse effects on lots of buildings in years to come.

It was a dry day at the time of the inspection and didn't hamper the survey.

## **OCCUPIED PROPERTY**

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

## **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.