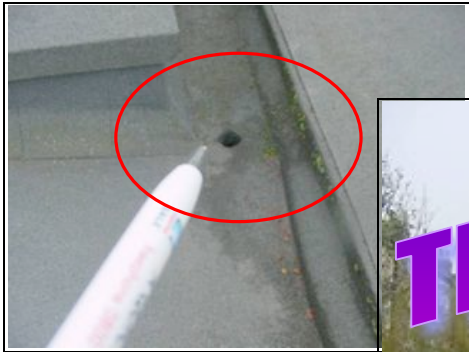


DEFECTS REPORT AND BUILDING SURVEY

XXX
Hackney,
London.
E8 XXX



FOR

Mrs X

Prepared by:

XXX

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS



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INTRODUCTION

Firstly, may we thank you for your instructions of XXX; we have now undertaken a Defects Report and Building Survey of the aforementioned property. This Survey was carried out on XXX.

The Defects Report and 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 external of the property starting from the top of the property down.

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.

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.



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REPORT FORMAT

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

GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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

TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED

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

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS



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

ORIENTATION

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

ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have used the term **ACTION REQUIRED** where we believe that there are items that you should carry out action upon

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

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SYNOPSIS

We met you at the property on the XXX and had a detailed discussion where you advised during the inspection of the property that the National House Building Council have been contacted and have carried out a renewal of the rear left hand side terrace at top floor level.

However there are other issues that you are concerned with. We have duly considered your comments and we would offer the following.

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

This is a three storey property with a lower ground floor that was built / refurbished a few years ago in XXX and constructed in a modernist style of architecture.

The property has various outside areas such as a terrace and balcony areas within the curtilage of the building. We would normally provide a more detailed description of the property here but as you are living in the property we assume you are familiar with it.

Modernist architecture defined

A style of architecture that uses strong, straight and angled lines. Clean and uncluttered, without excessive detail and large open plan areas adding to the style with structural elements often incorporated into the design.

LOCATION MAP

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PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

The following provides a photographic record of the external of the property on the day of our inspection.



Front Elevation



Front/right hand view



Left hand - low level



Left hand - high level



Right high level



Street view

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summaries are not ideal as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs. It is important the Report is read in full.

We have taken in the region of 150 photographs during the course of this defect report and survey and many pages of notes, so if an issue has not been discussed that you are interested in or concerned about, please phone and talk to us 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.

Introduction and overview

There is no getting away from the fact that the property has many problems. We have identified within this report what we believe to be the main issues along with what we believe to be the cause of these problems and the subsequent affects that are occurring within your property.

However, we would add that whilst the problems may be solvable the affects may take some to resolve themselves (a year plus).

You will need to take legal Advice with regards to how much space you have around your property to project into, what appears to be, neighbouring land. If this is not possible then a system of parapet walls will have to be used around the property.

Different types of dampness

There are many types of dampness found in different areas of the property or for different reasons, these are as follows:-

- 1.) Roof
- 2.) Walls
- 3.) Internal services

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4.) Lower ground floor

5.) Internal climate

We will now look at what we believe to be the fundamental issues with the design and ways forward, from repairing existing design elements, to redesign and to using solicitors and the NHBC - or not?

1.0) The roof area

1.1) Defects at roof level

The property has a flat roof that is finished in felt. We can see areas of poor workmanship including blistering and lapping of the felt that has now lost its bond.



Blistering and moss to felt



Felt becoming un-bonded

ACTION REQUIRED: Short term - the roof covering needs attention and any blisters should be cut out. Any areas where the bonding has been lost should be re-bonded. However we feel the roof is badly designed and to some extent you will be repairing a problem that will become a bigger problem in future years.

1.2) Roof design defects?

Overall we believe that the roof has various inherent design defects. We would list these as follows.

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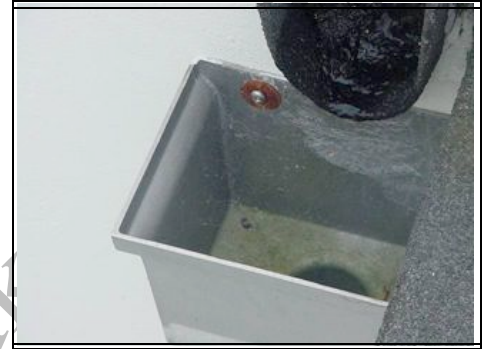
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1.2.1) This is a flat, flat roof rather than having a fall of 15-22 degrees and as such water will sit on the roof which will, sooner or later, cause ponding (literally ponds of water) which will cause accelerated deterioration to the roof together with sagging in areas of the roof.



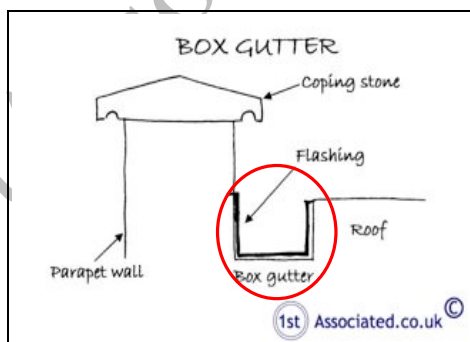
Water sits on the roof

1.2.2) The way water discharges centrally from the roof via a hopper head. We would much prefer to see external gutters and downpipes as if any problems do occur they can be easily identified. The problem with internal guttering is that it is hidden within service ducts and can therefore leak for some time without you noticing it, until there is a major problem.



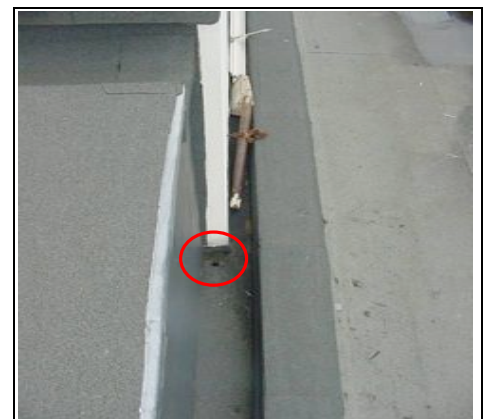
Hopper head

1.2.3) The right hand side box gutter is difficult to access and the outlet is less than 100mm which we believe is the minimum required/recommended for this roof and further investigation is required.



Box gutter circled

This sketch shows a parapet wall which this property does not have but we have used it to show the box gutter detail



Box gutter (right) and small outlet circled

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1.2.4) The gully's to the right hand side and to the middle of the roof look to have a minimal fall.

1.3) Poor quality of the roof material

We would also comment that the felt roof material used is not the best quality and we would much prefer to see a high performance felt. Indeed we believe we have seen in drawings that you showed us (although these may have changed over time) that this building was originally going to have a metal roof. Changing a metal roof to a felt roof such as this is likely to have saved money but may well have left you with problems.

ACTION REQUIRED: Short term- the gulleys and the roof need to drain towards the outlets. There is an additional problem with the outlets in that they have been formed into 100 mm pipes and as such are less than 100mm. We would add that we have recently been dealing with a problem where the entire roof leak was caused by the poor detailing around the outlet.



Small outlet on main roof

Long term - we feel the best way forward in the long term will be to start again with the roof and have a roof that has a considerable fall with different outlets (ideally external). If they are internal then the entirety of the downpipes need to be checked, ensuring that the downpipes travel in an easy route to the drainage points - if not they will leak over time.

National House Building Council (NHBC)

Whilst fortunately we have not had dealings with the NHBC too often over the years, any of our initial enquiries have ranged from poor to acceptable.

With specific reference to the roof

We believe you should draw to the attention of the NHBC the quality of the workmanship, i.e. the blistering and un-bonding of the felt that is occurring. You should also separately inform them of the design failings such as the lack of a fall to the gutter points and the size of the gutter

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outlets. If you do not receive a response within a set time then we would recommend that you take consultations with regards to legal action.

2.0) The walls

2.1) Rainwater discharging down the walls

Unfortunately we can see that there is no drip detail around the perimeter of the roof which is allowing any rainwater to discharge down the walls.

Drip detail defined

This is a detail that helps to throw rainwater away from the wall preventing the wall from becoming saturated as bricks are sponge-like in the way they can absorb dampness and moisture.



Rear of property – no drip detail
Rainwater will discharge down the wall

To the rear of the property the walls are brick, to the side they are prefabricated, pre-treated metal onto brick. In both cases the brickwork is becoming saturated and needs to have a drip detail similar to those added to buildings built many years ago (which have stood the test of time) and which are generally considered a good design practice.



'Drip detail' on older property



Front and side- poor drip detail-
water discharges onto the
brickwork

This detail will expel water away from the walls/brickwork. A problem that may exist is that you may not have ownership of the area around the property allowing you to add the proper detailing.

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ACTION REQUIRED: You need to obtain legal advice with regards to ownership of the area surrounding the property and whether you are allowed to carry out work within the adjoining neighbours air space. If you do not legally have rights of access then we strongly recommend that you speak to the owners and negotiate.

2.2) Dampness, mould and moss occurring to the walls

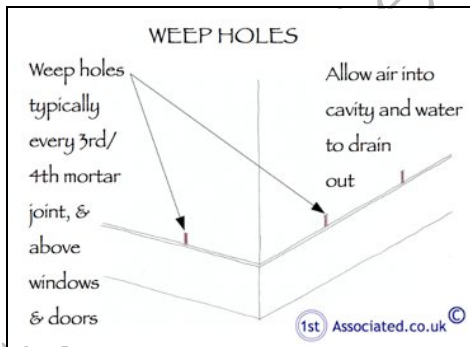
We also note moss, lichen and pattern staining together with, no doubt, dampness to the brickwork/walls.

More worryingly there appears to be cracking in the brickwork which can be caused by the combination of saturation and the drying out or it could be a feature of the original brick.

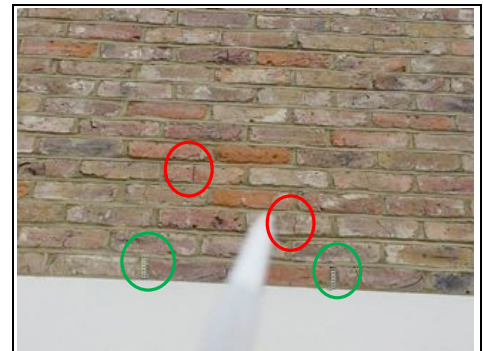


Moss and pattern staining -left

Obviously we do not know how the bricks looked originally and it could be argued that, dependent upon the type of construction, the bricks are purely cladding. From the weep holes seen it leaves us to believe that this may be correct.



Weep holes



Cracks in brickwork (red)
Weep holes (green)

2.3) Movement and cracking internally

We believe the general saturated nature of the brickwork and structure as a whole is leading to cracks appearing internally within the property.

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National House Building Council

With specific reference to the walls

Again the question is whether to bring this to the attention of the NHBC or not?

As we believe this would generally be considered as poor building practice we would recommend that you contact the NHBC and see what their response is. Again if you do not receive a response within a set time frame then we would recommend that you take consultations with regards to legal action.

3.0) Services

3.1) Plumbing

Where we could see the plumbing it looked to be a relatively poor standard of plumbing workmanship, for example, within the lower ground floor, left hand corner, where the pipes have been poorly jointed causing them to leak.

There could be similar other areas hidden behind the wall and as you seal one area up you move the weak link on.



Leaking joint

3.2) Water supply pipes

We would also add that we could see that plastic piping had been used throughout: we are finding problems can occur with the joints with this type of piping. We have experienced problems a few times now, for example, once where the vibration from the pump/saniflo worked joints loose and another where the joints had not been carried out properly.



Dampness to adjoining Wall

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It is fair to say that the jury is still out as to how good, in the long term, that plastic piping is as we only have long term experience with copper and lead piping. In this instance by long term we mean fifty plus years.



Plastic pipes in lower ground floor



Saniflo toilet

Saniflo Toilet

A macerating device for reducing the normal outlet on a W.C. from 800mm to much smaller.

3.3) Other water leaks

You advised us of other water leaks which are affecting the use of some the lights in the property.

This in our experience occurs where there is a water leak or condensation occurring and this then tracks along the electric cables and through the lights which tend to be the low point.



Dampness coming through the ceiling

ACTION REQUIRED: At the time of our inspection you had plumbers working in the property. From what we saw the standard of work seemed to be of reasonable quality (although we had limited time with them). We would suggest that they work their way through the plumbing that you can see in the property.

We have asked you to make a record identifying the problems with dates and that the plumbers advise as to how they have rectified the problems. Similarly if you use other workman we would like to see a

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similar record used which can then be used in a legal case or with the NHBC dependent upon what you decide to do and the best way forward.

4.0) Lower ground floor dampness

The dampness in the lower ground floor could be caused by:-

4.1) Leaking pipes

4.2) Water from the ground via the walls

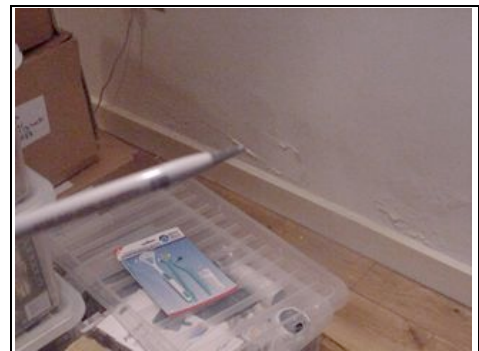
There are three types of tanking, please see our article at the end of the report. With the particular type of tanking used here it allows water to travel through the property but it should then be taken away.



We can see the tanking/damp proof membrane in place.

4.3) Water from the ground via the floor

Our concern is that the tanking to the floor has not been carried out properly and so dampness from the ground is coming up which, we would say, is evident by the efflorescence visible in the front bedroom/store room on the lower ground floor. This efflorescence shows that salt is present and would indicate that this water is from the ground. This could also account for the cupping/twisting in the timber.

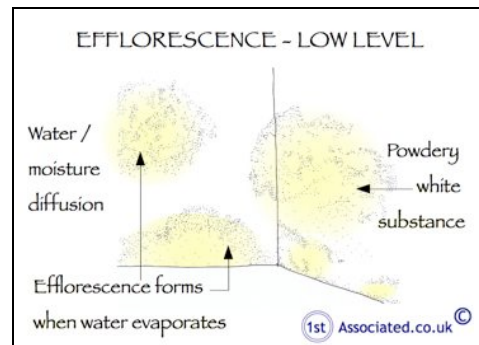


Efflorescence in the store area at front of lower ground floor

There is an outside chance that this could be water that has travelled from the leak and has been contaminated but we would suggest this is unlikely.

Cupping defined

The lifting of the timber to form a cup shape.



Efflorescence

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NHBC or not?

It would appear that, from our visual investigations, there is a defect possibly in the tanking.

ACTION REQUIRED: Most tanking will have a guarantee. You do need to ensure that the plumbing is not leaking so that this cannot be blamed by the tanking contractor.

Again we believe this should be brought to the attention of the NHBC informing them that the tanking appears to be leaking, again with a time frame set before legal advice is sought if no progress is made.

5.0) Internal climate of the property

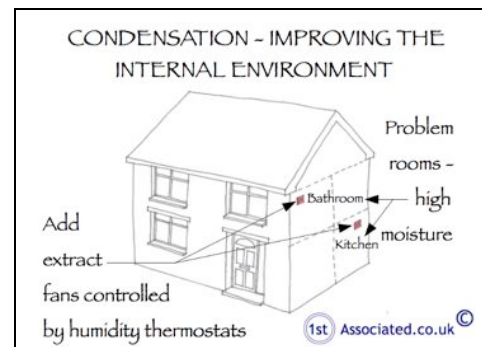
We have used the term internal climate to relate to conditions within the property which we feel could in themselves be adding to the problems.

We will start by saying that you need to think of your house as being a fairly wet sponge due to the dampness that is getting in possibly via the roof, possibly via the floor, definitely via the walls and definitely via the services.

There is also moisture/humidity generated internally that needs to be removed from the property.

5.1) Cold bridging/surface condensation

We are increasingly coming across problems with condensation in highly insulated houses, such as this, which also have cold elements in the structure such as the concrete floor which can cause cold bridging. There are also other possible cold elements within the structure (we have not had the benefit of opening up the structure).



Condensation

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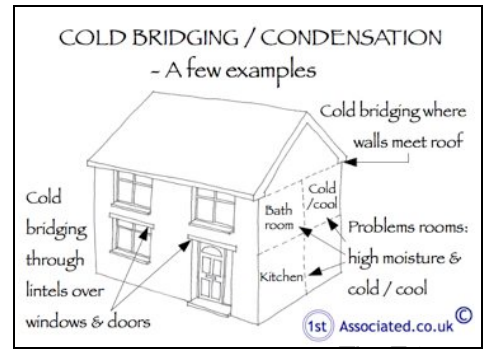
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Cold bridging defined

Cold bridging is caused by a colder element in the structure allowing coldness to pass through the structure much quicker when warm moist air is present in the property. Cold bridging is often caused by things like having a shower or a bath, cooking or washing, particularly if you are drying washing on the radiators. This is also caused by the general climate which results in condensation on the element.



Cold bridging

We feel the solution to the problem is to remove any humidity at source from moisture generating areas such as the kitchen/bathroom/shower rooms.

ACTION REQUIRED: We recommend that large humidity controlled extract fans are added, by large we mean 150mm minimum. These need to be vented to external air.



Replace with large humidity controlled extract fans

We have spoken to the plumbers who advise that they have had experience with this type of work and also have an electrician who can help to install it. This work needs to be carried out to the kitchen and all bathroom/shower rooms.

5.2) Interstitial condensation

We do need to draw you attention to the risk of interstitial condensation being caused in this property. This is condensation within the structure and could lead to long problems with the property.

Interstitial Condensation Defined

This is where moisture is present within the structure of a building. The more moisture it contains, the bigger the vapour pressure and the smaller amount of moisture, the less vapour pressure.

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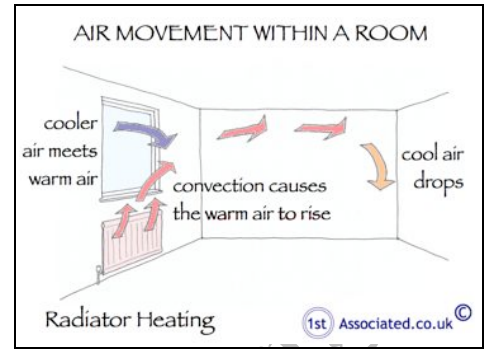
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5.3) Air circulation in the property

5.3.1) Radiators under windows

There is a lack of air circulation in the property. In theory, radiators situated underneath windows provide a better air circulation rather than on internal walls as this allows the warm air to hit the cool air from the window and circulate around the room (please see the adjoining sketch). The lack of air movement/circulation could be contributing towards the problems



Air movement



Internal radiators should be moved underneath windows



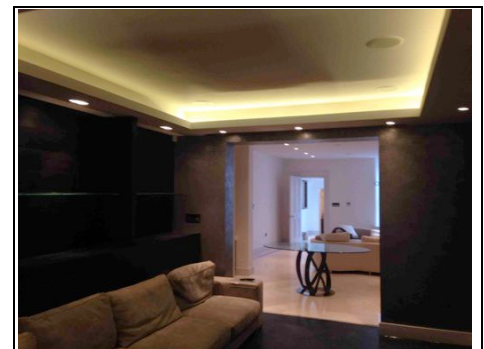
Internal radiator

5.3.2) Trickle vents

As discussed we do not feel that trickle vents in windows offer that much air movement in a property as they are relatively small.

5.4) Air conditioning

If you want to increase the specification in the property then we would recommend that you add full air conditioning which would be in the form of a unit that can both heat and cool and also adjust the relative humidity within the property.



Hidden air conditioning.
Photo of a property that we have been involved with recently

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We would suggest that this is carried out to the lounge area where you can actually make the ductwork a feature of the ceiling which leaves you with an inset ceiling.

ACTION REQUIRED: Add air conditioning

ANTICIPATED COST: This really depends upon the extent of the air conditioning, £5, 000 plus; please obtain quotations.

6.0) National House Building Council (NHBC)

In Summary

We certainly believe you should draw the problems to their attention as you should the Architect and the Builder. We suggest a polite letter to all of them advising them of the problems and concerns you have.

Rather than the NHBC arbitration process or any such arbitration process with the architects or the builders, and after having given them a reasonable amount of time, we would appoint a solicitor to write to them all asking for their response.

If there is no positive response and they are not going to help then you need to seek your Legal Advisors opinion on the amount of time it will take to take them to court and to a verdict and also their best advice as to whether you could win the case or not.

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SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION



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

From our discussions you advise that you want to stay in the property if at all possible. We do feel there are solutions but these are long term and will involve a considerable amount of money being spent as well as inconvenience.

In the first instance we feel that you should approach the NHBC with the report although we would suggest that further investigations are carried out. We would equally recommend that you should seek legal advice; however both of these processes could take a long time unless managed and you do need to set yourself a timescale.

Only you can decide if you are prepared to wait any longer to get these issues resolved. We do feel that they are resolvable with a variety of options dependent upon your budget and how long you wish the solution to take time wise and lastly which is best for you.

Within the report we have tried to give a broader view which we feel encompasses many of the issues you have drawn to our attention. However if we have missed anything please contact us as we will be more than happy to discuss these further.

We would ask that you read the External part of the report in full and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

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THE EXTERNAL AREAS



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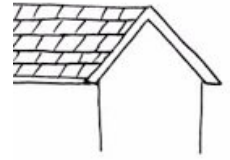
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ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS



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

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

We will consider the roof in one area, the main flat roof.

Main Flat Roof

Whilst these roofs are called "flat", present building regulations and good building practice presently requires a minimum fall of 12 degrees.

Flat roofs are formed in a variety of materials. Difficulties can arise when the water is not discharged from the roof but sits upon it, as this can soon lead to deterioration which flat roofs are renowned for.



Flat roof

The perimeter is a different colour
has it been repaired already?

The main roof is flat and mineral felt covered. The roof has a minimum fall and blistering is visible and also areas of unbonded felt. We also surprised to see that there was no ventilation (as far as we could see).

Has the right kind of material been used for the roof?

The roof has an older style, poorer quality roofing felt which tends to deteriorate over the years and has a limited life. This type of felt is generally thought to have a life of ten to twenty years (possibly thirty years) assuming the work is carried out to a reasonable standard which it hasn't been in this case and there will be accelerated deterioration. We would much have preferred to see a high performance felt/elastomeric felt.

High performance felt/elastomeric felt defined

These are modern materials that have an elasticity to them allowing movement which, in theory, gives them a longer life if laid properly and assuming that the roof is well designed and detailed.

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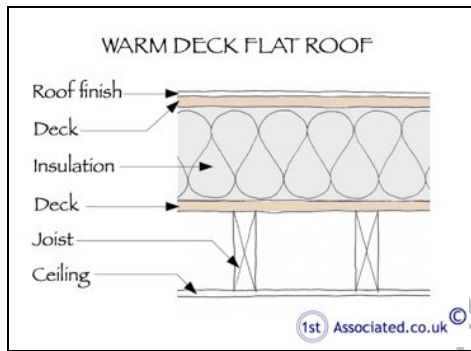
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Ventilation

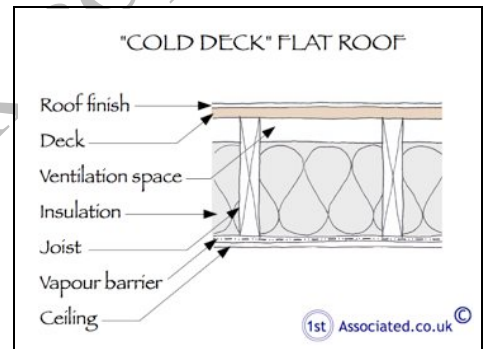
Building Regulations require flat roofs to be ventilated. Building Regulations are not retrospective but the reason for the requirement is to make sure that any moisture that enters the roof construction is dispelled by way of ventilation. We would suggest that if the opportunity arises ventilation should be provided.

Insulation

As we have not opened the roof we cannot establish if there is insulation within the roof or a vapour barrier. Without the vapour barrier and combined with inadequate ventilation there will be an increase in the risk of wet or dry rot. There are several types of flat roof including a warm deck construction and cold deck construction as shown below in the sketches.



Warm flat roof



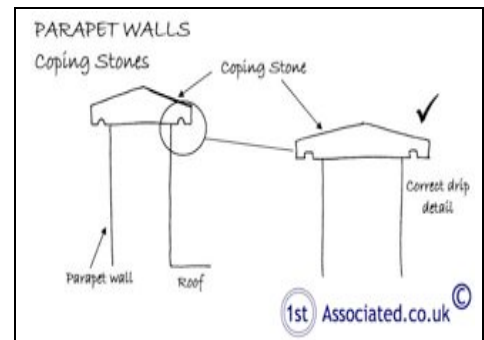
Cold flat roof

Detailing to roof perimeter

Another concern we have with the roof is that the detailing to the perimeter is poor and we believe is allowing water to discharge down the metal cladding and then onto the brickwork which is not satisfactory. It is more usual for the detailing to throw the water away from the building.



Water discharges onto the brickwork



Traditional drip detail on a parapet wall throws water away from the wall

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Vertical slates – right hand side

We have not had a close inspection of the vertical slates on the right hand side but they look to have been nailed in place. It needs to be checked that the correct nails have been used (non-ferrous).

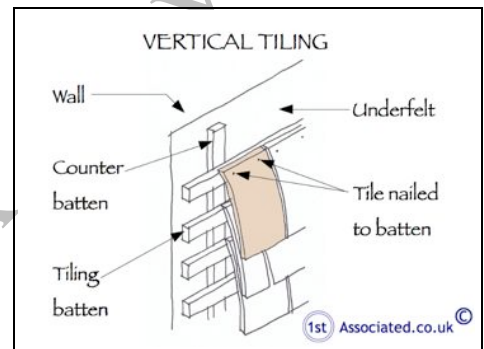
As a more general comment we are always concerned when we see bad workmanship as we always worry about what the workmanship is like on the areas we cannot see.



Vertical slates - right



Slates have been nailed on



This sketch shows the likely construction although this shows tiles instead of slates

The main Flat roof has been inspected from the roof itself.

Finally we were only able to see one hundred per cent of the main flat roof but had a slightly limited view of the vertical slates. We have made our best conclusions based upon what we could see, however, a closer inspection may reveal other defects.

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Main Roof Structure

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 have not seen the structure of the roof as this has not been opened up. Ideally we do need to open up this roof from within the building. We will be happy to return to carry this out providing there are workman on site to carry out the opening up and repairs.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would like to open up this roof to check and confirm its construction.

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GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



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

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

Box Gutters, roof gulley's and downpipes

The property has internal running gulleys with a box gutter to the right hand side and a hopper head to the rear left.



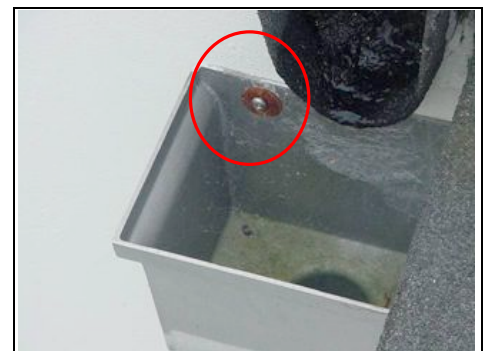
Internal downpipes



Mesh that used to cover downpipe outlets



Ponding on roof



Hopper head with rusting washer

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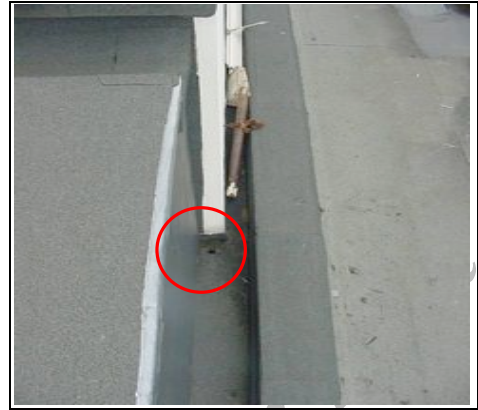
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Right hand box gutter

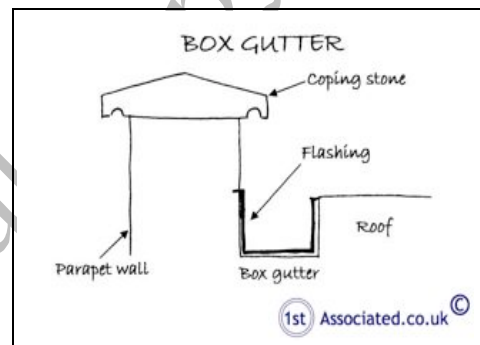
This is a very poor detail. We much prefer to see box gutters carried out in lead as these cope and adjust with movement within the building. There is a build- up of debris in the gutter that needs to be removed.



Box gutter with small opening



Box gutter on flat roof



Box gutter

ACTION REQUIRED: Please see our comments within the Executive Summary

Downpipes from the roofs

The openings in the roof that allow the water to discharge from the roof are minimal and therefore we feel are likely to block. We have recently been dealing with a property problem where the entire roof leak was caused by the poor detailing to the outlets.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend these areas are opened up and checked but you will need a roofer on hand that knows what they are doing when this is taking place.

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Soil and Vent Pipe

The property has internal soil and vent pipes. We noted one to the rear left hand corner. We have not identified these as a problem area.



Flue from internal soil and vent pipe

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.

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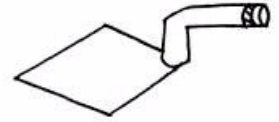
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WALLS

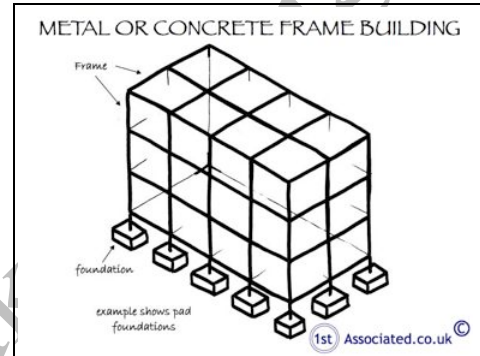


External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.

The walls are constructed of three materials, metal cladding, brickwork and render.

Structural Frame

We believe this property is built on a concrete structural frame, possibly a metal structure frame. The property is clad with a metal cladding at high level, brickwork at both high level and low level and areas of render.



Structural frame

ACTION REQUIRED: Further investigation by opening up the structure to check its construction.

Metal cladding

Whilst this type of cladding is a modernist style of construction we believe the detailing to be poor without suitable drip details.

This was viewed from ground level and we may find further defects when a closer inspection is carried out.

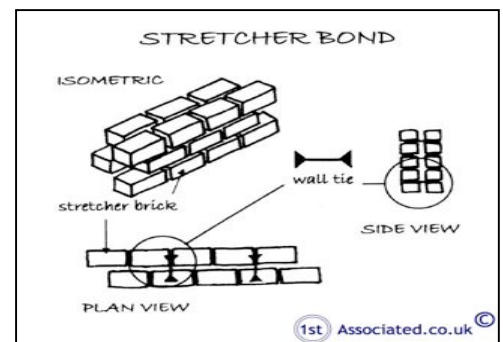


Metal cladding at high level

Brickwork

The brickwork is a relatively modern stretcher bond brickwork.

The term "Stretcher Bond" means that from the outside of the property, you can see a row



Stretcher Bond brickwork

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of the sides of the bricks (known as "stretchers") followed by a course above of the same stretch of bricks set off so the joint is centrally above the "stretcher". This pattern would repeat throughout.

Cavity Walls

Cavity walls have their origins in Victorian times but were used extensively in England Post World Wars.

Cavity walls originate from solid walls not always being waterproof against driving rain and not providing a good degree of thermal insulation. The design of cavity walls makes them relatively unstable and they depend upon the wall ties.

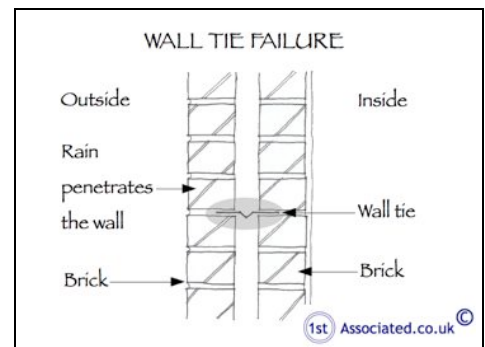


Stretcher bond brickwork

Wall Ties

Walls of cavity construction should incorporate ties to hold together the inner and outer leaves of masonry. We would typically see horizontal cracking where there are problems.

In this case we have not noted any horizontal cracking however wall tie failure is a progressive problem. We would add as there is no access to the cavity it has not been inspected and we cannot comment on the presence or condition of wall ties. As such we cannot be hundred per cent certain with regard to this problem unless we open up the structure.



Wall tie failure

Vertical Cracking

We believe this relates to dampness in the structure but it may have been an original 'feature' of the brick but we are not certain about this. However, we can point in you in the direction of a brick expert who we have had dealings with and who may well be able to advise us further on this.



Cracking in brickwork

Render

There are small areas of render, we believe this are likely to have been a design feature. We believe that the render, in some cases, covers the structural frame.



Render areas

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 / metal panels / render / 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 / metal panels / render / plasterwork have been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the brickwork / metal panels / render / 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.

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FOUNDATIONS

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

Foundations

We really do not know what foundations the property has but as it's a commercial style building it may have piled foundations but we simply do not know.

Piling defined

This is where pillars of reinforced concrete are pushed through the ground to find a firm bed of rock to sit on or suitable supporting area.

London Clay

As with most properties in the London area, this property stands on London Clay. It is therefore more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in London properties.

Building Insurance Policy

You should ensure that your Building Insurance Policy contains adequate provision against any possibility of damage arising through subsidence, landslip, heave etc.

Much as we would like to we are unable to keep up with the changing insurance market and give you advice with regard to this.

Cracks

Please remember to talk about any cracks identified within the property. Often insurers and the NHBC may refer to progressive and non-progressive cracking. Unfortunately this is something we are unable to comment upon from a one-

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off inspection; the Building Research Establishment recommends a year of monitoring of any cracking.

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

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

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

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TREES

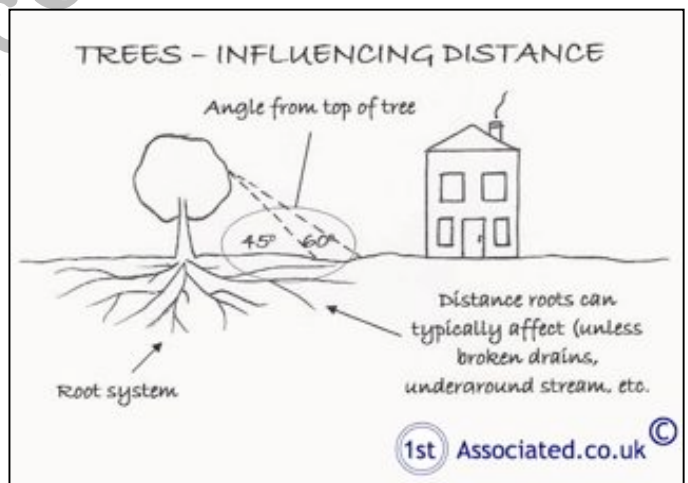
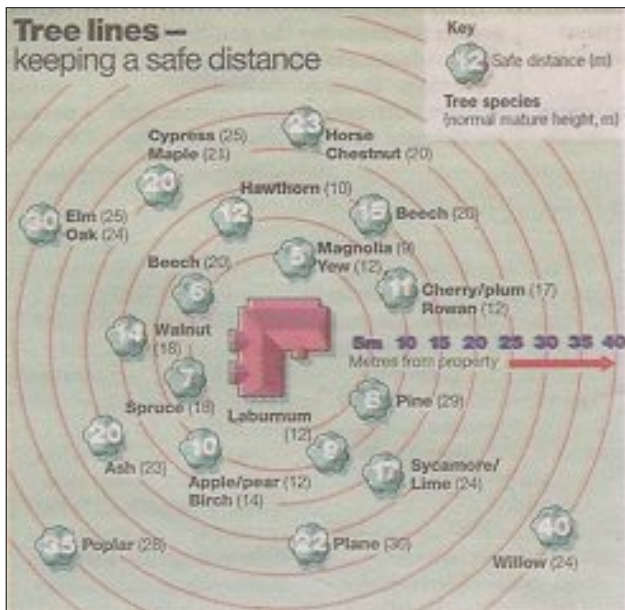
Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.

There are trees within what insurance companies would term as influencing distance of the property. We hope with a modern building such as this that these trees have been allowed for in the design. However given the other problems in the property we cannot be certain of this.



Trees to the front

ACTION REQUIRED: Ideally it would be good to open up the foundations to check what has been carried out. We would expect the type of information that is gathered if a claim is made against the NHBC, Architects and Builders.



Influencing distance of trees to a property

Influencing Distance Defined

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

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DAMP PROOF COURSE

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

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we can see cannot see a DPC as in this age of property it should have been built in as work proceeded.

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.

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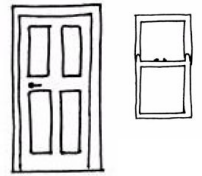
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FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



This section covers fascias, soffits and bargeboards and windows and doors, and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.

Fascias and soffits offer protection to the rafter feet and also allow the securing of the guttering. Windows primary functions are to admit light and air, but they also have thermal and sound properties. The doors allow access and egress within the property.

Fascias and Soffits

They have been formed in felt in this particular instance which is far from ideal and further investigation is required as to how the designers felt this would be an acceptable way of discharging rainwater off the roof.



Felt

We would usually expect some form of small up-stand to direct water to the gulleys and downpipe areas

Windows and Doors

The property has metal windows with trickle vents. Assuming they are modern aluminium windows they will not transfer heat loss/coldness as they will have a barrier/break in them. Older metal windows were renowned for condensation problems. We simply do not have the data or information to comment any further than we have so far but from our visual inspection we believe them to be modern windows.



Metal windows

ACTION REQUIRED: Further investigations required.

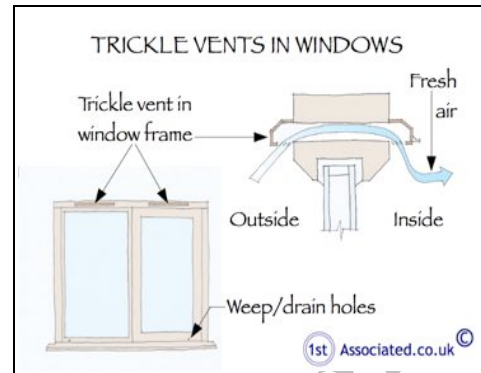
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We would draw your attention to the fact that sealed double glazed units can fail, particularly as a result of poor workmanship during installation. Failure of the seal leads to condensation between the two panes of glass and simply replacing the affected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



Trickle Vents Defined

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

Trickle vents

Window is too far forward?

We are concerned that the windows are possibly positioned too far forward and this is allowing dampness to come in around it.

ACTION REQUIRED: Further investigation will need to be carried out with regards to this.



Window may be too far forward

Finally, we have carried out a general and random inspection of the external joinery. 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.

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EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

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

There will be some external decoration to the rendering required but not at present.

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 XXX and XXX.

Internal

We have limited this part of the report to the external only as without opening up the structure we do not feel that we can comment further on the internal condition but we do recommend that you read our comments within the Executive Summary.

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CONCLUSION

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
XXX

This Report is dated: XXX

Further information

We would ask that you provide more information with regards to the timeline and any other information that you have with regards to drawings and specifications, these would of course help us. The time line is within the appendices.

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LIMITATIONS

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

CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

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

ENGLISH LAW

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

SOLE USE

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

ONLY HUMAN!

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

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

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WEATHER

It was a cold autumn day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

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

NOT LOCAL

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

OCCUPIED PROPERTY

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

INSPECTION LIMITED

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been limited by:-

1. We did not open up the flat roof.
2. We did not open up any floors.

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Our computer system sends two copies of our Terms and Conditions to the email address given to us when booking the survey; one has the terms attached and the other has links to the Terms and Conditions on our website (for a limited time). If you have not received these please phone your contact immediately.

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APPENDICES

1. Accommodation and facilities
2. Construction Summary
3. Timeline
4. Photographic record by room
5. Contacts
6. References
7. The electrical regulations – Part P of the Building Regulations
8. Information on the Property Market
9. NHBC Article
10. Damp proofing Article

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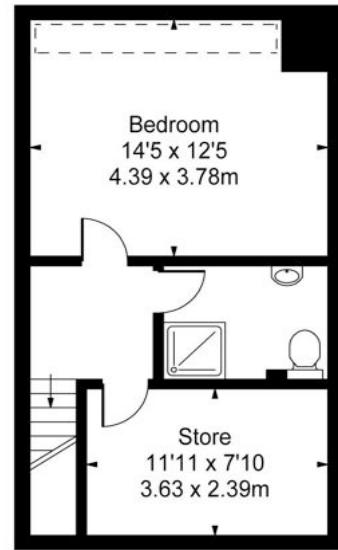
ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

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

Lower Ground Floor

The lower ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 2) Stairs and hallway
- 3) Store/bedroom (front)
- 4) Shower Room (middle)
- 5) Store (rear)



Lower Ground Floor

Internal photos



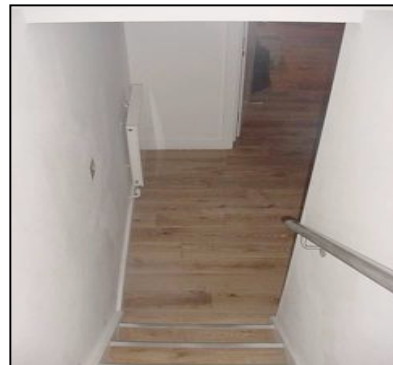
Store/bedroom (front)



Shower room (middle)



Store (rear)



Stairs down to lower ground floor

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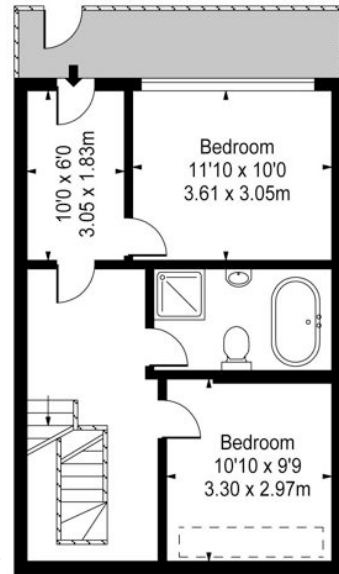
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Upper ground floor

The upper ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Entrance hallway
- 2) Bedroom/store (front left)
- 3) Bedroom/store (rear left)
- 4) Bathroom (middle left)



Ground Floor

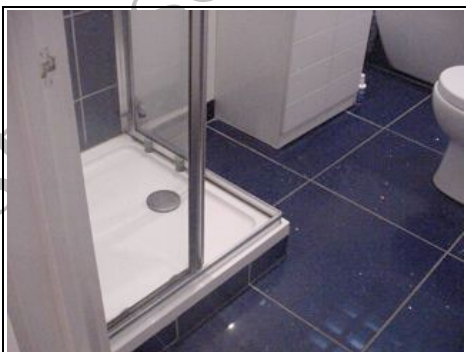
Internal photos



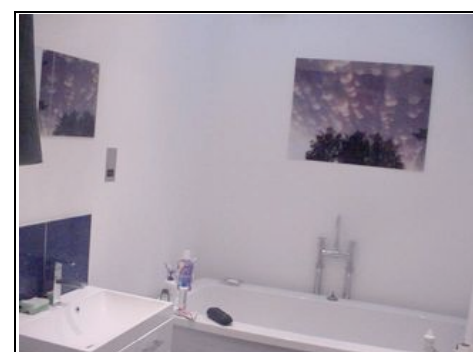
Bedroom/music room (front left)



Office/bedroom (rear left)



Bathroom (middle left)



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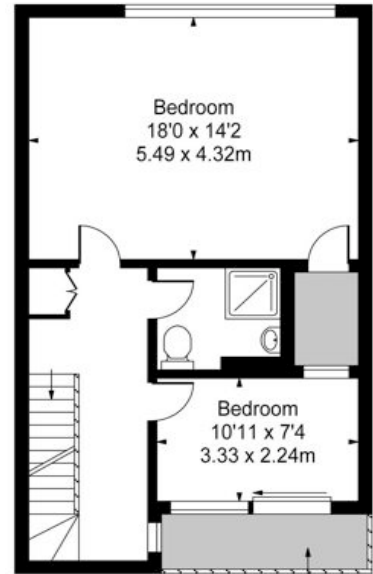
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First floor

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Staircase and hallway
- 2) Master bedroom (front)
- 3) Balcony area to Master bedroom (left)
- 4) Shower room (middle left)
- 5) Study/bedroom (rear left)
- 6) Balcony to rear bedroom

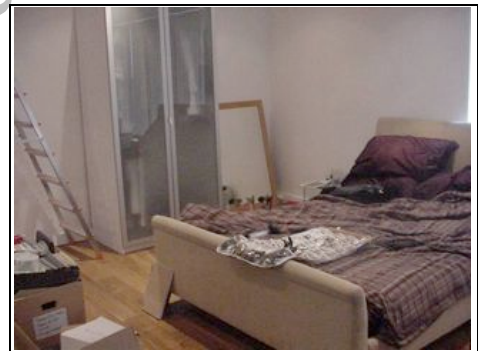


First Floor
Balcony
10'4 x 3'1
3.15 x 0.94m
(approximate)

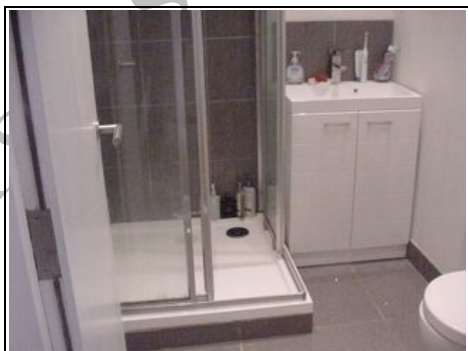
Internal photos



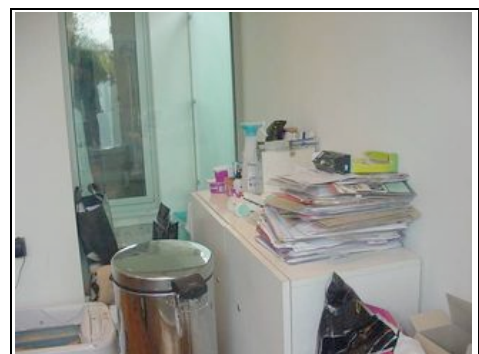
Master bedroom (front)



Master bedroom (front)



Shower room (middle left)



Bedroom/office (rear left)

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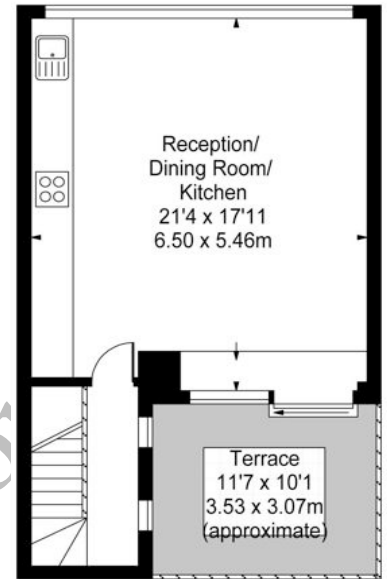
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Second Floor

The second floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Staircase and hallway
- 2) Open plan lounge/ kitchen/dining area
- 3) Terrace/balcony



Second Floor

Internal photos



Front open plan kitchen/lounge
(Kitchen - left)



Front open plan kitchen/lounge
(Lounge area -right)



Balcony/terrace area

Outside Areas

The property has a variety of balconies/ terraces all within the curtilage of the building plan.

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SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

External

Main Roof:	Flat, mineral felt Vertical tiling
Main Roof Structure:	Not known
Gutters and Downpipes:	Internal downpipes Central gulleys Box gutter - right
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Internal
Building Structure:	Not known, possibly concrete or metal framed(assumed)
Walls:	Stretcher Bond Brickwork Painted Render Metal cladding panels
Windows and Doors:	Aluminium double glazed windows

Internal

Ceilings:	Plasterboard (assumed)
Walls:	Mixture of solid and hollow (assumed)
Floors: Lower Ground Floor:	Concrete (assumed)
Upper Ground Floor:	Concrete (assumed)
First Floor:	Concrete (assumed)
Second Floor:	Concrete (assumed)

Services

We assume that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The boiler is located on the first floor.

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

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Time Line – A brief history of the structure

We have not been able to contact you to discuss the timeline further.

DATE	DESCRIPTION
TBA	Property built
TBA	Problems first noted
TBA	NHBC contacted
TBA	Work carried out by NHBC

We would advise that we have tried to call you on several occasions including today, the XXX at XXX and have sent emails on XXX and XXX and a text message on XXX.

We require the dates for the information in the timeline above and any other information that has been requested or is relevant to the report.

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Photographic record

Lower ground floor

Store room (front)

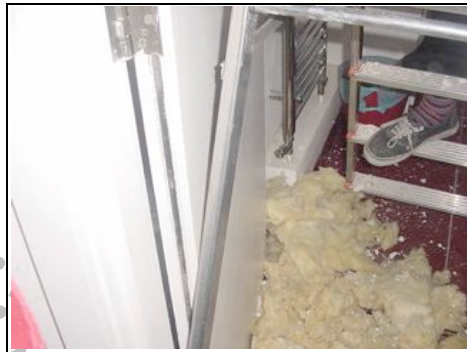


Adjoining wall affected by damp

Shower Room



Opening up ceiling to resolve problems with traps

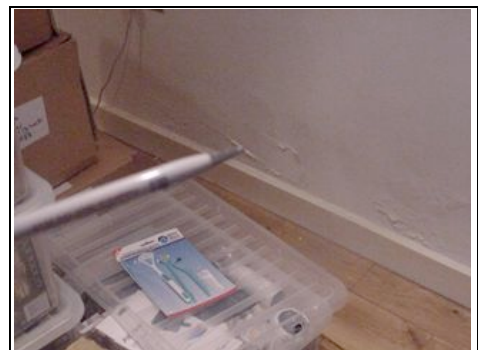


Insulation removed but it was dry



Plastic pipes

Store area (rear)



Efflorescence

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Upper Ground floor

Bathroom



Staining to ceiling



Dampness coming through the ceiling

Bedroom one



Rear balcony

Bedroom two



Balcony
Internal bead being used externally

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First Floor

Bathroom



Extract fan is too small



Door leading to balcony
cracking visible

Second Floor

Terrace



Detailing to terrace

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Contacts

Plumber

XXX

Architect

To be advised

Builder

To be advised

Structural Engineer

XXX

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THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

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

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

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

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

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

Homeowners will still be able to do some minor electrical jobs themselves. To help you, we've put together this brief list of dos and don'ts.

Work You Cannot do Yourself

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

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INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

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

www.landreg.org.uk

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.

www.halifax.co.uk and www.nationwide.co.uk

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

www.hometrack.co.uk

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

www.motleyfool.co.uk

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

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www.rightmove.co.uk

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

www.zoopla.co.uk

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

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Problems with the NHBC Warranty

NHBC Warranty, general misunderstanding

Over the years we have been involved in a number of cases with problems with the NHBC Warranty. This is because partly there is a misconception by most clients of NHBC Warranty as to what the NHBC Warranty actually is.

The main thing that customers think the NHBC offer is a guarantee over ten years for anything at all that goes wrong on a new build property that is purchased with an NHBC Warranty / Guarantee (more about whether the NHBC is a Warranty or Guarantee later).

This is simply not correct. As we understand it, the NHBC will we believe confirm this if you phone them (and be patient on the phone because it does take sometimes take quite a bit of time to get through to the NHBC). The NHBC will advise in the first two years that the responsibility for any problems with your new building is with the builder or developer that built the property, although the NHBC will offer a mediation service (much more about this later on) and in the third to tenth year the NHBC will offer a warranty (note not a guarantee) only on the structural elements of the property. This is our understanding of matters.



NHBC not prepared to look at the work

We spoke to the NHBC about this and they offered their mediation service, which they explained does not relate to our consumer rights but relates to the builder building to the build mark. We asked them whether they were prepared to come out and see the work and they advised that they would not at this stage. This unfortunately meant that they were only prepared to talk about the matter whilst the home owner was left with the heating not working. The decision was therefore made to carry out the plumbing repair and of course once the plumbing repairs had happened neither the builder nor the NHBC were happy to get involved as they advised that they needed to see the building before any work was carried out.

NHBC Warranty customers unhappy

We can give various instances where we have dealt with customers that were simply not happy with the NHBC Warranty. This has been for a range of problems from a central heating system in a brand new house that had had the micro-bore central heating pipes put in poorly (the plumber that we asked to inspect them said that many of them had been hand bent) which closed the bore of the pipe and stopped the water from transferring around it, meaning that the heating wasn't working.

We have also been involved in a problem with a new property, again with an NHBC Warranty, where the drains fell towards the house, which obviously is quite a problem when you are trying to get waste water away.

We have been involved in several condensation claims, where there have been construction problems that have caused condensation, everything from insulation not being consistent to a heat exchange system that simply wouldn't vent the property appropriately.

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Mediation service, is it worth it or should you just take legal action?

Let us talk further about the mediation service that the NHBC would offer. In the instance that we were involved in there was a problem with the central heating in the house, which was not working. The builder concerned had advised that they didn't consider it to be his problem, the plumber that had been called out to look at the property said the problem was that the pipes to the central heating had been bent very badly and had effectively been closed up, not allowing the hot water to pass into the radiators or through the system.

More unfortunately, the back part of the bend tended to be inside the wall. The matter cost several thousand pounds to rectify and involved draining down the system, opening up some of the walls and putting new pipework in. Remember this is all on a brand new heating system in a brand new property that was less than two years old.

What do you do if something goes wrong with a property that has an NHBC Warranty on it?

We have mentioned earlier that the NHBC offer a mediation service. Our question is, is it worth it or should you just take legal action?

In the problems with houses that we have been involved in we generally recommend not to take mediation service as we are concerned with the close relationship that the NHBC has with the builders that partly fund it. We may be completely wrong on this and the NHBC may be totally independent, but we do feel that if you are going to have a mediation service on a property then it should be an appropriate independent professional, such as a building surveyor or architect or civil engineer, or someone from the Chartered Institute of Building Services for a services problem.

The problem we have had is the NHBC are not prepared to look at the problem

As the heading says, the biggest problem that we have had when dealing with these methods is the NHBC are not prepared to look at the problem. We have managed to get the original builders / developers out that built the properties to come and have a look at them but we have not managed to get the NHBC to come and have a look at the problems, and we do feel that unless the problem is looked at and analysed and research carried out on it and investigations then there is very little that the NHBC can do with regard to the technical matter of the problem, which is usually the main issue.

In a previous article we talked about a problem with a heating system where the pipe bends were blocked and the difficult situation that we were put in by the NHBC when they were not prepared to come and look at the property. We then had to advise the client that as the winter was coming they needed to fix the heating system and that we recommended them to proceed. Unfortunately the builder, although they came to visit the property, didn't consider the heating to be a problem. So, the building owner was left with a brand new property which had a big bill of several thousand pounds on for alterations to the central heating system that should never have had to be carried out. Unfortunately in the end the decision was made that the costs of going to court and the time that would be expended would not be a good use of time for that particular client.

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Is the NHBC Warranty worth the paper it's written on?

You only need to do the most basic search on the Internet to see the many opinions on this. There was a very good Which? article some time back that analysed the problems and there was a BBC television Watchdog programme back in 2010 that looked at several different scenarios, one of which is a two bed apartment that comes with all mod cons (and we quote) "open plan kitchen, living room, en-suite master bedroom and lots of mould!"

The mould was said to be down to lifestyle. This is a situation that we have come across several times, both under NHBC Warranties and also in legal cases with landlords and tenants and they do need a lot of investigation. The article reports the NHBC took nine months to resolve - a long time!

If you Google Kimberley Deardon and the NHBC this should come up

They also talk about another property – a five bedroom house that had damp and mould which looked to be a problem with the damp proof course. It has taken over two years to resolve.

If you Google Ellen Burnell and the NHBC this should bring this one up.

They also talked about a third case by Mr and Mrs Myers which related to foundation problems. It quotes a six figure claims cost to date.

The article is also interesting because it mentions about how the NHBC is funded and about 50% of the funding is from investment income and then it says the other 50% is paid for by builders.

We would suggest to you that you read the Watchdog viewers responses as these are very interesting too.

There is also a site called Snagging.org where you can read some interesting comments on the forum.

MoneySavingExpert.com as usual has lots of useful information on it including an interesting bit on NHBC and builders and also NHBC or architects certificates; and interesting read too.

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Resolving Dampness in Your Basement

The most common dampness found within a basement is penetrating dampness. Methods have improved over the years and we can now look at waterproofing as opposed to damp proofing.

British Standard 8102

British Standard 8102 is the British Standard relating to basements. There are different grades in relation to basements, for example:

Grade One is for a garage

Grade Two is for a working area, i.e. a plant room

Grade Three is a residential grade

Grade Four is basically Grade Three with relative humidity control

There are various options for damp proofing your basement:

Type A Tanked Protection

Type B Integral Waterproofing

Type C Drained Cavity Protection

We will now consider the three options in turn:

Tanked Protection Type A

This is where a waterproof membrane is added to keep water out, for example within a Victorian property basement.

Integral Waterproofing Type B

This is where waterproof concrete is used, for example when building a bridge that needs to sit in water.

Drained Cavity Protection Type C

This is a dry wall system with a drain behind it and is said to be the best type.

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This is an Overview of what each System Requires

Tanked Protection Type A

This involves adding a lining to the area, usually internally (as this is easier / cheaper) but sometimes externally. This can, if not carried out properly, add bending stresses which cause cracking to the tanking and as such a Structural Survey should be carried out to establish the construction and its attributes and whether it is capable of coping with the change in pressures as walls, which are normally brickwork and are strong in compression but not in tension.

We would add that this can move the damp problem around rather than resolve it. Although this does not form part of the presentation we thought we would add it to give a balanced view.

Tanked protection can be carried out by a general builder rather than a specialist builder; this can equally be an advantage or a disadvantage. It does mean that if you are having other building work carried out it can be incorporated into the work programme. If the tanking is used on the outside of the wall, whilst difficult to carry out due to the digging down the side of the property that is required, it does put the protection in the right place.

Integral Waterproofing Type B

This tends to be used on commercial applications and requires specialist design and knowledge.

Drained Cavity Protection Type C

The main key benefits are that it doesn't affect how the structure works, i.e. no added pressures; it is relatively easy to retrofit; and it resists vibration, unlike the tank. It has been used for 10 15 years, so now we have historic evidence on how it works.

Drained Cavity Protection Installation Process

The sump is formed

Membranes added to the wall

Drainage channels are added

The close cellular insulation is added

The water proofing membrane (with a shallow or deep stud depending upon the configuration of the area)

The floor system

The finished wall

The pump is added into the sump

This article is based on a presentation by Dr Peter Fitzsimons as well as various other sources.

The presentation was given to the Independent Surveyors and Valuers Association (ISVA)

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