

MAIN ELEMENTS SURVEY
OF

1 ACACIA AVENUE
BRISTOL

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF
MR & MRS SMITH



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instructions

I was instructed by Mr & Mrs Smith of 1 Acacia Road, Bristol, to inspect 1 Acacia Avenue, Bristol, and report on its general state of repair and condition.

A 'Main Elements' survey such as this is as described in my scope of service for building survey reports, a copy of which you have read and is attached in appendix B of this report. A further description was covered in my instruction letter to you of 1st January 2010.

You will have noted from the scope of service that all surveys are necessarily limited and restricted and, whilst I do not propose to go into the details of this within the body of this report, I must reiterate that I cannot comment upon the condition of any of those parts of the building which were concealed, hidden or inaccessible and I am not in a position to state that these areas are free from defect.

1.2 Limitations

This report is based on a visual inspection of the readily accessible areas of the property only. No steps were taken to expose elements of the structure otherwise concealed, or to remove surface finishes for examination of the underlying element.

I was not instructed to make arrangements for specialist surveys of the electrics, gas, drainage installations, water distribution or for these to be tested by a specialist. I have however made recommendations where I believe tests should be carried out.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Mr & Mrs Smith.

1.3 Information provided

Prior to my inspection, I was provided with the address of the property and a copy of the agents particulars.

1.4 Date of inspection

My inspection was undertaken on 1st January 2010.

1.5 Orientation

For the purposes of this report, I have assumed the main entrance faces south and all directional references follow this orientation. However, where references are made to 'left' and 'right' of a specific element, these directions are taken as assuming the reader is standing in the front garden, facing the front entrance door to the property.

1.6 Situation

1 Acacia Avenue is situated in a secluded location immediately behind Acacia Road, approximately 400m from Acacia Crescent and the amenities offered by this location. It is also within approximately a mile of the lower end of Acacia Place and the facilities that it has to offer. The City Centre is a further 2 miles away approximately with access to major transport links

1.7 Weather conditions

At the time of my inspection, the weather was dull and overcast, but dry.

1.8 General description

The house is a Victorian or possibly late Georgian terraced house with accommodation over ground and first floors. The house has a kitchen/dining area together with a sitting room, entrance hall and WC at ground floor level with three bedrooms, one with en-suite shower room and a family bathroom at first floor level.

The house has been constructed of brick walls which have been rendered to both the front and rear elevations. The flank walls to either side form the party walls between the subject property and the houses in the terrace to either side. The house has a pitched tiled roof incorporating a lead lined central valley gutter.

A small rear courtyard is present but the majority of the garden lies to the front of the house with a small paved area for seating, a paved path leading to the front of the house and a lawn. The garden is enclosed by a combination of dwarf rubble stone walls, hedges and timber panelled fences.

1.9 General, legal and contractual matters

Being part of a terrace of houses, the property is bounded on two sides by adjoining houses. This includes the main flank walls of the house as well as the boundary walls / fences to the front and rear gardens. It is likely to be the case that these walls will be classed as party walls under the Party Wall etc. Act 1996 and therefore responsibility for ownership and repair will be divided between the two properties making use of the wall. You should also note that any work which is carried out to either premises that has an impact on these walls may fall under the Act and the adjoining owners need to be given notice prior to any work commencing.

The large wall to the rear of the courtyard retains the higher ground to the rear. The ownership of this wall is unclear. You should ask your solicitor to investigate your repair and maintenance liabilities with regard to this wall.

The drainage systems to the house may be independent although it may well be that they form part of a shared system with the adjoining premises. Your solicitor should be asked to check responsibility for the upkeep of these drains, and what rights of access to them if any are held by adjoining owners.

You should ask your solicitor to investigate whether any damp or timber treatment guarantees are available.

The kitchen extension should have been constructed to the Building Regulations in force at the time of construction. You should ask your solicitor to obtain copies of any plans relating to the construction and a copy of the building control sign off certificate. I suspect that the extension did not require planning permission, however you may wish to check on this as well as whether conservation area consent was required.

This particular area of Bristol is not known for its mining, however isolated pockets do exist. Your solicitors should be asked to establish whether any mining or any other subterranean activities have taken place under or near the building and whether any contamination of the site has been identified and satisfactorily treated.

2. Structure

2.1 Sub-structure

I have no information on below ground condition, however I can confirm that there was no evidence of significant structural distortion or movement in the superstructure, to suggest any deficiencies with the sub-structure or foundations.

To establish the exact size and form of the sub-structure, trial holes would need to be dug. I do not consider this necessary, based upon the findings of my inspection.

3. External surfaces

3.1 Roof

The roof to the premises can hardly be seen from ground level due to the presence of the front parapet wall. I was however able to get onto the roof through the velux rooflight on the landing and can confirm that the roof consists of two single pitched roof sections together with a lead lined central valley gutter. The front and flanks to the roof have parapet walls up against which the pitched roofs abut, but at the rear a gable section has been created to each roof with no upstand protection provided. The central valley gutter discharges directly into the rainwater hopper to the rear of the house.

In effect the roof is separated into two distinct sections with single pitched roofs to either side of the property falling from high level at the parapets of either flank to the central valley gutter at a lower level in the centre. These roof sections have been further detailed with the installation of a hip section to the front of each roof slope. These hips extend towards the front parapet and the junction between the base of each hip and the parapet is weatherproofed with a lead lined gutter. The change in direction of the roof slopes where the hips have been created have been weatherproofed with hip tiles that have been bedded in mortar.

The roof has 3no chimney stacks with each stack accommodating two flues. These stacks serve the fireplaces within the house.

The roof has been covered using concrete interlocking tiles with concrete hip tiles which overlay the felt and battens beneath.

The parapet walls to either side of the property and also to the front are likely to be of brickwork although the brick could not be seen due to the presence of render and lead flashings.

The central valley gutter extends from the front of the property and narrows as it heads towards the rear where it discharges into the rainwater downpipe at the back of the house.

The roofs to the house generally appear to be in reasonable order and are free from significant distortion or defect. It would appear that many of the elements have been replaced in the recent past and the majority appear to be in sound condition.

Properties of this nature would have used clay tiles when they were first constructed but over the history of the house the tiles have presumably failed and replacement was warranted. Often it is the case that concrete tiles are used as a replacement because they are much more hardwearing and can be cheaper than new clay tiles or slates. The product is perfectly good however these concrete tiles will be significantly heavier than the original clay tiles would have been and very often the additional weight can lead to bowing and distortion of the roof timbers. I am pleased to say that in this instance the additional weight does not seem to have affected the house and the roof generally appears sound and in reasonable order. The tiles generally sit well and extend over the edge of the central valley gutter to provide added weather protection. In areas to the lower section of the gutter this has the appearance of indicating that the tiles have slipped however this is merely part of the detail.

I did spot a few cracked tiles which will require replacement however this should merely constitute a like for like replacement and should be straight forward. Of course the consequence of having cracked tiles will potentially lead to weather ingress internally and therefore I would recommend that replacement is carried out as soon as possible. I can however confirm that the roofs do have a felt underlay which will collect any water that does penetrate the tiles and I can also confirm that I saw no evidence of dampness internally immediately beneath the broken tiles, nevertheless the repairs should be carried out.

The hip tiles to the roof hips generally appear sound and in good order. They are free from cracking and significant distortion and appear adequate. The mortar bedding to the hip tiles is beginning to crack and break up and this will allow water penetration to work its way through the roof covering. Once again it is hoped that the felt underlay will catch any water ingress and discharge it to the gutters however the hip tiles should be re-bedded in new mortar to remove any cracks and ensure the roof is fully weather tight.

The central valley gutter consists of a series of timber boarded sections which step down towards the rear of the house and as they step down they narrow in width with the widest being to the front of the house and the narrowest to the rear. The valley gutter to the front is approximately one metre in width with the gutter to the rear approximately 300mm. The material used for the gutter is the same throughout, that material being lead. The backing material cannot be seen but is normally marine plywood in modern construction although bearing in mind the age of this roof it may be some other wood material.

The gutter is installed in sections with each section being approximately 1.8m - 2m in length before it steps down towards the rear of the house thus the larger width of gutter is at a higher level to the front of the property with the narrowest section to the rear being at a level some 200m - 300m lower. Each gutter section is installed as a single section which then steps down at a weatherproofed junction to connect into the next section.

I was able to inspect the lead at close quarters and although it is a little discoloured and dated generally it seems to be in good order and free from significant cracking or defect. There does appear to be a difference in the age of the lead work installed to the gutter which would indicate that some repair / replacement has been carried out in the past but generally all of the lead appears of reasonable quality and condition.

There is one section towards the rear of the gutter near the roof light where a "Flashband" repair has been carried out probably to repair a crack or defect within the lead. This "Flashband" repair is now in itself breaking down and further repairs will be warranted. I am however pleased to say that there is no evidence internally within the rear bedroom of water leakage beneath this area however I would recommend that repairs are carried out before leaks do occur.

When lead gutters are installed it is recommended practice to follow the guidance of the Lead Sheet Association. Lead as a material suffers from a large co-efficient of expansion and as such the material expands and contracts at a high rate during different weather conditions. It is important that lead is only installed in certain lengths to ensure that through a period of expansion and contraction it is allowed to move and not crack up as a consequence. General guidance depending upon the code and quality of the lead, is that the code of lead to be used in gutters of this nature should only be installed in lengths of approximately 1.8m – 2m in length and it is good to see that lead in this particular gutter probably falls within these dimensions. I cannot confirm the exact code of lead used and thus do not know whether it falls entirely within the guidelines of the Lead Sheet Association, however from my cursory inspection the lead appears to be functioning well without significant defect and thus I suspect that it broadly does.

Due to the width of the two upper sections of gutter to the front of the property, a central roll has been installed to allow expansion and contraction across the width of the gutter as well as the length. These rolls are designed to join the two sections of lead either side to create a weatherproof joint but also to allow movement of the lead to prevent cracking. I can confirm that the rolls appear to be well formed and functioning well. I can also confirm that I saw no evidence of dampness internally within the house which would indicate that the joints are well weatherproofed. I could not however see the underside of the timber decking to the gutter because it was inaccessible.

The lead to the central valley gutters extends, not only across the gutter floor itself, but also up beneath the tiles to either side of the gutter. This is to ensure that, if the gutters overflow at any time during very heavy rainfall, the water does not go over the top of the lead and into the house through the roof. Under modern construction techniques at this junction you would

normally expect to find a timber fillet over which the lead is dressed to provide a further upstand through which water cannot pass and the lead itself will be finished with an overturned welt as an added defence. On older properties it is seldom the case that such a fillet has been provided and indeed, on this particular roof, no such fillet or welt is in place. I can however confirm that the lead extends up beneath the tiles by a reasonable margin which should suffice for the extent of rainfall expected from this roof. Once again I can confirm that I saw no evidence of water ingress internally which would indicate that, despite its deficiencies, the gutter is functioning satisfactorily. At this stage I do not believe that the gutters require any adaptation, however if at any stage you do find that the gutters back up you may wish to install a fillet and welt to the lead upstands.

To either side of the property parapet walls have been constructed to separate the adjacent terrace of houses. These parapet walls are in effect a continuation of the party walls which divide each adjoining property. These parapets have been extended above the line of the roof of each property to enable pitched roof sections to be created to avoid the need for the roof to be completely flat. The majority of the parapet walls are protected within the roof void created by the sloping sections to either side of the roof. However there are small sections to either side which stand proud of the roof. These sections have been capped with a concrete coping and the junction between the head of the pitched roofs and the coping has been weatherproofed using a lead soaker and cover flashing which has been chased into the party wall immediately beneath the coping.

The copings to the walls generally appear to be in reasonable order. They are well bedded and in sound condition and free from significant cracking. The mortar pointing to the coping stones is beginning to crack and break up and replacement of this mortar will be necessary in order to prevent water ingress. However I was pleased to see that the copings have been bedded on a damp proof course, certainly to the right hand parapet, which will prevent any water that penetrates the coping stones from entering the wall of the house. If a damp proof course has been provided in one area, it is logical to assume that the remaining copings also benefit from a damp proof course because they are of the same age, however the course was not visible in the majority of areas and therefore I cannot categorically confirm this. I can however confirm that I registered no unduly high levels of dampness internally within the habitable accommodation which would indicate that regardless of any minor cracking and defects the copings are functioning satisfactorily. Nevertheless I would recommend that remedial work is carried out to repair the pointing and prevent any further deterioration.

The lead soakers and cover flashings to the parapets are generally in sound order and free from significant cracking or defect. The lead work consists of soakers which extend up the inside face of the parapet and over the top row of tiles. In addition, on top of the upstand to the soakers adjacent to the parapet a cover flashing has been installed which is also chased into the brickwork immediately beneath the coping stones. This provides a weatherproof junction between the roof and parapet. The soakers being the primary barrier with the cover flashing providing an added weatherproofing detail to prevent the possibility of water ingress. Such a detail is commonly recommended for such areas and I can confirm that the soakers and flashings appear to be functioning well. I registered no unduly high levels of dampness internally within the habitable accommodation to give me cause for concern.

Once again the lead work to this detail is installed in short lengths to allow expansion and contraction. Although the lead is faded and discoloured I suspect that it will be serviceable for some time to come.

A further parapet wall has been created to the front of the property. Once again this parapet has been provided with concrete coping stones and I suspect that the stones are placed upon a damp proof course although one could not be seen. This parapet is of a slightly different detail because of the way the roof hips are constructed and the parapet itself consists not only of lead flashings but also some render. There have also been valley gutters created due to the junction between the hip to the roof and the parapet.

The copings to the parapet are generally of similar condition to those elsewhere on the property although there are signs of greater misalignment and deterioration to the copings in this area than elsewhere. They are still functional and in reasonable order but of slightly worse condition. The mortar pointing to the copings is once again cracked and will warrant repair, however the same comments apply as to the remainder of the copings.

The lead work to the gutters and up stands are once again of similar age and condition to those elsewhere in the property. I can confirm that I saw no evidence of significant cracking or deterioration which would indicate that the lead work is functioning well and is serviceable. The lead is faded and discoloured but should prove satisfactory for the medium term at least.

The rendered section of wall is generally in poor order. The render is cracking up and the bell cast which has been created at the base of the render is generally in poor order. This render is hollow and replacement will be necessary in the short term. Once again I can confirm that I registered no unduly high levels of dampness internally within the front rooms of the house which would indicate that water ingress in this area is not currently a problem however over time the position will get worse with water penetrating the cracks causing not only direct water ingress potentially but also freezing and causing further deterioration to the render. There was however some sign of historic water ingress within the roof void which is dealt with in greater detail in section 4.1

The roof is provided with 3 no vents to allow ventilation of the roof voids. One vent serves the extract to the en-suite and the other two (one to each roof slope) provide ventilation to the roof voids. A further vent brick has been installed within the left hand rear gable end. Ventilation is important for timber because it prevents the build up of stagnant air which can cause rot to occur. If ventilation is provided it potentially reduces the prospect of rot occurring even if the conditions are damp therefore it is good to see that some ventilation has been installed. As detailed below in section 4.1 it would appear that this ventilation is inadequate and the introduction of a series of new vent tiles is essential to prevent the onset of destructive rot to the roof timbers. I would recommend that a series of tiles are introduced along each roof slope at staggered intervals of approximately 1.5m. A similar arrangement can be seen on adjacent roofs.

Where a parapet has not been created to the rear of the house, the pitched roof sections are finished at the gable ends with the open edge of the tiles that have been filled using a mortar fillet which is underboarded at the roof verge.

The junction generally appears to have been satisfactorily formed and is free from significant defect. The mortar fillet is showing signs of some minor cracking and is likely to continue to deteriorate but is adequate. This does not give me cause for concern and is quite common within construction of this nature.

The underside to the verge often utilises a sheet material containing asbestos. Latterly, following the instigation of the Asbestos Regulations, the boarding was changed to a Masterboard, which has similar properties to asbestos cement sheeting, but does not contain asbestos fibres. The true nature of the material cannot be determined from a visual inspection.

There is a possibility the boarding may be asbestos cement sheeting but, equally, it is possible the boarding is of a material which does not contain asbestos. Unfortunately, I am unable to comment as to whether the sheeting has an asbestos content, however, if you are concerned, I can put you in touch with organisations that would be able to give you the appropriate advice. What I can however say is that the boarding is at high level, out of harms way and generally appears to be in good order and free from cracking or deterioration. Ultimately, even if the boarding does contain asbestos, it is unlikely to be disturbed and, therefore, the recommendation is likely to be that the material is not removed, but it should be noted that the boarding contains asbestos, so when any work is carried out to the roof, contractors can be made aware of its presence. It is often worse to disturb an area of asbestos as part of removal, rather than leave it in place where it is currently doing no harm.

I raise the issue, because it is something you should be made aware of, rather than wishing to raise any alarm and would suggest you give me a call if you have any concerns regarding my comments above. I reiterate that if you have any concerns you should seek specialist advice.

A single ply membrane roof has been installed to the small terrace above the new kitchen extension. This membrane is grimy and dirty but generally does appear to be relatively new and well fitted. The product appears satisfactory and I can confirm that I saw no evidence of dampness internally which would indicate that it is functioning well. The perimeter of the roof is further weatherproofed with a lead cover flashing which appears to be relatively new and in good functional order.

A PVC framed and glazed double pitched roof has been constructed above the main kitchen extension. This roof appears sound and free from significant defect. The PVC has faded and discoloured externally and could do with cleaning but appears to be in good order.

3.2 Chimneys

The property has 3 no chimneybreasts which extend above roof level. The two to the rear have been capped off with half round concrete ridge tiles whereas the chimneybreast to the front still retains the original clay chimneypots. Each chimneybreast is constructed of brick work and rendered with a bell cast as well as incorporating lead soakers to the side of each chimneybreast and a lead apron to the front.

The chimneystack to the front of the property is higher than both the rear chimneystacks and also higher in section than the corresponding half of the chimney to the property on the right hand side. It is unclear as to why the chimney has been raised in this way but I suspect that it has something to do with trying to gain additional draw for the use of an open fire.

The condition of the chimneystacks is generally the same for each stack. I can confirm that due to the limited height of the rear chimneystacks I saw no evidence of significant movement or distortion however they are not particularly high and any distortion would have limited effect in any event. The front stack which is much taller does show signs of some inward leaning to the top two courses of brickwork and to the clay chimneypots. At present the structure appears solid and the chimneypots appear well bedded however you should monitor this position and if the distortion gets any worse some remedial action may be necessary.

The render to each of the chimneys is generally in poor order. It is cracking and becoming dislodged and this position will worsen over time. This cracking will not only potentially allow water ingress into the brickwork of the chimney but it will also continue to deteriorate itself and areas of render are likely to come adrift and require repair from time to time. I can confirm that I saw no evidence of dampness internally which would indicate that damp ingress is not currently an issue however I would recommend that the render is rectified at the earliest opportunity before damp could materialise.

The brickwork to high level on the front chimney is generally in reasonable order and free from cracking. There are signs of distortion to the brickwork and the mortar joints to the bricks are missing in numerous areas which is likely to be one of the reasons why the movement has taken place. This movement is currently slight however you should re-point the brickwork not only to prevent any further movement but also to weatherproof the joints. If repointing is not carried out soon and deterioration is allowed to continue then there is a distinct possibility that the upper section of the chimney will become unstable.

The chimneypots to the front chimney appear to be in good order and free from significant defect. The flaunching in which the chimneypots are bedded is however cracked and damaged and will require repair. This is quite common and in fact you will note that a large number of the properties in the terrace have had this area treated in the past where it has broken down. At present I can confirm that I registered no evidence of dampness internally however the position will worsen over time and immediate repair is warranted. Similarly although the rear chimneypots have previously been removed and replaced with half round ridge tiles these ridge tiles have also been bedded in mortar and this too is beginning to crack

up, more particularly to the left hand chimney rather than the right, although the right hand also shows some signs of crazed cracking. Again I registered no levels of dampness internally but the position will gradually get worse and repair is recommended.

Where chimneys are capped off it is important to keep them well ventilated to prevent condensation to the flue, which can lead to damp. I was pleased to see that where the chimneys have been capped with ridge tiles, the curved edges of the tiles have been left exposed to allow a through flow of air. Internally, where fireplaces have been blocked up, ventilation grilles have been installed as is commonly recommended. I can confirm that I saw no evidence of condensation or damp to any of the chimneys which would indicate that they are adequately ventilated.

The lead soakers and front aprons to each chimney are generally in sound order and free from significant defect. The quality and age of the lead is commensurate with that elsewhere in the building and is generally reasonable. The flashings appear to function well.

3.3 Gutters and Downpipes

I have of course already discussed the central valley gutter which is located on the main roof. This gutter collects all the rainwater from the roof of the building and discharges it to the rear of the house. The water is then collected by a cast iron hopper and rainwater pipe which in turn connect into a PVC soil and vent pipe that is located centrally on the rear wall. This pipe then discharges into the below ground drainage via a rainwater gulley within the rear courtyard.

I can confirm that the cast iron hopper and pipe generally appeared satisfactory and I suspect that it is perfectly adequate in dealing with the amount of water that comes off the roof. However it is blocked with dirt and debris to the hopper at high level and I would recommend that this debris is removed in order to allow the pipe to work as it is designed to do. At present I suspect that any significant water runoff will overflow the head of the pipe and discharge itself as a deluge within the rear courtyard.

The cast iron has been decorated but this decoration is beginning to break down and the metal beneath is showing through. At present it does not appear to show any signs of corrosion, however I would recommend that redecoration is carried out as soon as possible to prevent any corrosion from taking place.

The PVC pipes generally appear to be in reasonable order and well fixed. They are extremely dirty and cleaning is warranted but there is no evidence to suggest that they are not functioning satisfactorily.

The gutters to the kitchen extension are of PVC. They are well fixed and in good order, however they are dirty and contain a moderate degree of debris. These gutters should be cleaned out regularly to allow them to function properly.

3.4 External Walls

The walls to the premises are likely to be of brick construction albeit they are rendered externally to both the front and rear elevations and therefore the full makeup of the walls could not be determined. In any event due to the age of the property the walls are unlikely to contain a cavity and are likely to be of solid construction. Indeed, if you look at the house to the far left of the terrace which is of the same construction, you can see the presence of header and stretcher bricks in a Flemish bond which is indicative of a solid 9 inch wall. In this house it is also clear to see the extent of the decorative string courses.

The walls in general appeared satisfactory and I saw no evidence of significant cracking or distortion to give me cause for concern. There are signs of some minor distortion or movement within the walls to the rear of the property which would indicate that the house has suffered from some structural movement in the past, although these cracks are relatively minor in nature and generally occur in natural weak spots in the structure, such as above

window heads etc. The cause of this cracking is unclear although it may be as a result of minor settlement or vibration through general household movement, such as walking on floors, slamming doors etc.

The cracking is only visible to the rear of the house and is relatively minor. I do not believe that it is indicative in any way of any significant subsidence of the property as a result of a significant defect to the foundations or a change in ground conditions, but more as a result of general minor movement as would take place in all structures. Nevertheless, the position should be monitored and remedial work may be required if the position worsens. Clearly, without carrying out a prolonged period of monitoring I am unable to determine whether the movement is historic or ongoing. However the current position does not give me cause for significant concern. I would however recommend that the cracks are repaired in order to prevent further deterioration of the render as well as the possibility of water ingress.

There are areas of render to the front elevation where it is hollow and breaking down and repair will be required. This generally appears where the original decorative stonework has been rendered and painted, although it is not necessarily limited to those areas. It is not always a desirable option to render over stone which should be allowed to breathe. The render if not correctly applied, creates a waterproof background which does not allow moisture to evaporate from the stone and thus either the moisture appears as dampness internally or causes the render to blow externally which it has done in this instance and has caused the finish to fail in isolated areas.

I would recommend that if the blown areas are to be repaired in the future that you either expose the stonework or use the render with an appropriate mix to allow some evaporation of the moisture contained within the stonework.

The render to the front elevation, apart from the defects mentioned above, generally appears sound and free from significant defect. There are no signs of significant cracking and the render is well decorated. The render at low level has been provided with a bell cast which will help to allow water run off from the walls to be discharged away from the house. This bellcast generally appeared in reasonable order, although there are signs that the render is breaking up and coming away from the substrate in isolated areas and I suspect that this is as a result of dampness trying to escape from the masonry behind. Isolated repairs will be required in this area as the render continues to break down however these areas are currently minor in nature and should only constitute the need for remedial work rather than full re-rendering, although the position will almost certainly get worse over time. You should also note that where patch repairs are carried out it can be difficult to get an exact match in both render and decoration.

The front elevation is provided with decorative stone courses to window heads and a decorative cornice detail to high level as well as a balcony detail to the bathroom. It is apparent from adjacent properties that additional stone string courses are incorporated within the brick walls but these, on the whole have been covered by the render finish. It is these areas in particular where the render shows greater signs of deterioration. This deterioration mostly consists of blown render where it has come away from its background, rather than cracking and is only in isolated areas. Nevertheless the deterioration is likely to get worse and some remedial action is likely to be required in the near future. On the whole however the bulk of the render to the elevation appears sound and free from significant cracking or defect.

Once again this stonework where exposed has predominantly been painted, although the sill details are still exposed stone. The decoration throughout is generally good although there are areas to the stone in particular where it is breaking down probably once again because the stone has not been allowed to breathe through the paint applied. Decoration of stone is quite a common treatment although the same comments apply as to the render application over the stone in that the stone should be allowed to breathe and unless the right sort of paint is used the decoration is prone to failing. I would recommend that when you next redecorate you take care in selecting an appropriate type of paint to ensure a lasting finish.

The decorative cornice at high level is showing signs of deterioration. These cornices are prone to water collection which not only causes issues to the cornice itself but can manifest itself as dampness internally within the building. This cornice is in line with the roof void internally and therefore some of the water staining in this location may be as a result of the cornice detail. It can clearly be seen that deterioration has taken place and I suspect that water collection is also an issue.

You will see from adjacent properties that the cornice has been covered with a lead flashing to prevent the deterioration and build up of water. I would recommend that such a capping be placed up on the subject cornice to prevent any further deterioration.

The render to the rear elevation is generally sound but in slightly worse condition to that on the front. There is a sign of hairline cracking beneath the rear bedroom window extending toward the soil pipe opening in the wall. There are also signs of movement and vertical cracking above the head of this window to either side. This cracking would be indicative of some form of structural movement although there is no evidence of corresponding cracking internally, although this is only true of a couple of the cracks and not all. Those internal cracks which are present are hairline only and occur in common weak spots in the building such as beneath windows etc which would indicate that the movement is minor in nature. I have no way of knowing if the movement is ongoing or has ceased. Therefore I would recommend that the position is monitored and if the cracking gets worse than remedial action is carried out. At present the cracking is minor and although indicative of movement it generally does not give me cause for too much concern.

The render has been painted in a white colour and the render is now dirty and discoloured and will require redecoration in the near future however it is perfectly satisfactory. Over time you may wish to freshen it up.

The render to the kitchen extension is much newer and free from significant cracking or defect although again it does show signs of staining and discolouration and redecoration could be carried out at the same time as redecorating the remainder of the house.

The render to the rear boundary wall is generally satisfactory at low level within the courtyard however the render at high level is badly cracked and crazed and will deteriorate over time. A remaining section of the rear wall is of fair faced stone. It should be monitored in detail because if any render falls from the wall it has the potential of coming through the glazed kitchen roof. I would recommend that the position is assessed at close quarters and any remedial work carried out immediately. This render is applied as a decorative finish to the stone wall which separates the house from the high level road to the rear. I was able to inspect this wall from the road side and it would appear that the wall is not a continuous wall running the full length of the terrace, but a series of interconnected walls of differing types of construction. This makes me believe that the walls are the responsibility of the individual property owners as opposed to the local authority although this will need to be confirmed with your solicitor.

The wall appears sound although large areas of mortar pointing are missing and I would recommend that the wall is repointed to ensure that it does not lose any of its stability. The wall does not show signs of any significant distortion or movement therefore I do not believe that the cracking to the render is as a result of any structural movement. The cracking is likely to be due to shrinkage and an inappropriate render mix having been used.

It is usual for retaining walls such as this to contain weep holes to prevent a build up of water pressure from the ground behind. The only exception being if the ground behind is of rock or other solid construction. This particular wall, for whatever reason does not contain weep holes, however other than the cracking to the render, I saw no sign of significant distortion or defect to give me cause for concern that water pressure is having an undue effect on the stability of the wall.

The remaining boundary walls which enclose the courtyard are once again rendered and painted to match the rear wall of the house. The render generally appears to be in reasonable

order. There are signs that it may have some crazed cracking which may allow damp ingress but generally it is reasonable and should not allow much moisture to penetrate.

3.5 Windows

The windows to the property are all of timber and of the sash type, with the exception of those to the kitchen extension which are PVC incorporating a top hung opening window. The windows to the front of the house opened and closed satisfactorily but I was unable to open the first floor windows to the rear bedrooms because they were locked.

The windows in general are reasonable in quality however the decoration is breaking down and redecoration will be required in the near future to prevent the onset of rot.

The sill to the ground floor sitting room window has rotten and replacement of the sill will be required although the remainder of the sashes themselves and the box in which they sit generally appear to be in sound order. I can confirm that I saw no evidence of rot to the remaining windows.

The majority of the windows are single glazed although the window within the front bedroom appears to have been replaced recently and as part of that replacement double glazing has been installed. You will probably find that the single glazed windows do suffer from condensation and it will be necessary to wipe down the timber from time to time to remove any moisture and mildew however they should prove serviceable. I can confirm that I saw no evidence of rot or mildew to the windows internally at the time of my inspection, which would indicate that condensation does not appear to be a significant problem.

It will be necessary to ease and adjust the windows which do not open and you may find that the windows rattle judging by the fact that cardboard has been placed between the sashes of the rear left hand bedroom window however they should be relatively easily repaired and remain functional as long as decoration is carried out and they are kept in good order.

A glazing pane to the centre of the rear right hand bedroom has broken. It is unclear as to why this breakage has occurred however the pane will need to be replaced. There is a possibility that the breakage is as a consequence of some movement to the rear of the building corresponding to the cracks externally however I reconfirm that there is no evidence of significant structural distortion to window heads or floors internally which would be indicative of any significant structural movement. There are signs of some cracking to the foot of the window within the rear right hand bedroom which could indicate some ongoing movement however the position should be monitored as detailed above.

The Sash windows have been provided with sash locks and pull handles which are basic in quality but satisfactory. In the bathroom it appears that condensation has caused deterioration to the timber where the fixings have come away from the top of the sash window. This will have to be repaired but should be relatively easy to do. To prevent further deterioration it is important that the room is kept well ventilated, particularly during and after use of the shower.

The window to the sitting room still retains the internal timber window shutters. I was unable to close these shutters at the time of my inspection due to furniture being in the way however they looked functional and in reasonable order. I suspect that they will prove satisfactory.

The PVC windows to the kitchen are in good functional order. They are a little grubby externally through leaf debris etc, but are generally sound.

3.6 Doors

The front door to the property is timber and of the panelled type. The door is generally in reasonable order, it opens and closes satisfactorily and does not bind on the frame. There are signs that it has dropped slightly and some air gaps are present but generally the door is functional and in reasonable order. The fact that it has dropped is an indication that the

property may have moved in the past, but movement was minor and does not give me cause for concern. I saw no defects in adjacent surfaces to indicate that any movement was ongoing.

The door is relatively well decorated and although periodic decoration will be required it should prove satisfactory. The door is set back from the front of the house to create a porch area and this will help to prolong the decoration. The porch area itself consists of rendered walls which are as described above and a floor which is covered in tiles with a concrete nosing / edge detail

The tiles generally appear to be in reasonable order. They are a little dirty and do suffer from minor cracking but are functional. The concrete nosing has broken down and one section is missing. You may wish to repair this for aesthetic reasons, however the defect should not be of detriment to the house.

The door furniture is a mixture of ages but is complimentary to the age of the property and in reasonable order although the spring appears to have broken on the letterbox.

To the rear of the property a set of timber glazed French doors have been installed. These doors are generally in reasonable order and open and close satisfactorily. The decoration to the doors is discoloured but generally in reasonable order and although periodic decoration will be required it is sufficient to protect the timber at present.

The door handle to this door appears to be period and may even be original to the house. It has started to corrode and I would recommend that it is treated to prevent further corrosion and the necessity to replace the handle.

3.7 Gardens and Boundaries

The house has a small courtyard garden to the rear which is paved with concrete paving slabs that have been provided with pea gravel joints to allow water runoff. An Aco channel has also been installed immediately in front of the rear wall of the house to provide additional drainage. The rear courtyard is enclosed by a very high rear retaining wall together with the rear wall of the house and boundary walls to either side between the house and adjoining properties. A raised border has been constructed from rubble stone in which a tree has been planted.

To the front of the house there is a large garden which consists of a path and seating area which have been paved with concrete paving slabs as well as a large lawn with some raised borders. The garden is bounded to the left hand side by a dwarf rubble stone wall which has been topped with a hedge. The right hand boundary has a series of fence panels on top of a raised flower border.

The paving slabs and gravel to the rear courtyard generally appear to be sound and in good order. They are a little grubby due to leaf mulch but they are generally level and free from cracking. I suspect that these slabs will perform satisfactorily for your needs. The Aco channel appeared to be in good order and free from defect. I suspect that it functions satisfactorily and discharges the rainfall as intended, although of course it was not raining at the time of my inspection. The raised border is sound and in good order. The rubble stone wall is in good order and free from any significant cracking and distortion. Although the tree will need to be regularly pruned to prevent any root damage to the adjacent walls. I have commented on the condition of the boundary walls in greater detail above.

The front garden is generally in good order and well tended. The paving slabs to the seating area and path are generally sound and free from significant cracking. They do suffer from some minor distortion and movement but this is minimal and should not prove problematic.

The dwarf wall to the left hand boundary is sound and in good order and the hedge above is well tended. The pointing to the stone is breaking down in places but generally the wall is functional and in good order.

The fence to the right hand boundary is in sound functional order. The panels are discoloured and the timber faded but they are well fixed and in reasonable order. Repair and maintenance will be required and the panels will continue to deteriorate, but they should prove serviceable for the short to medium term. The dwarf wall and raised border along this boundary is generally in sound order and free from significant defect.

The front boundary facing Acacia Avenue consists of a rubble stone wall which has been topped with concrete coping stones. A wrought iron gate secures the front path and the original iron fence is present although it has not been fixed within the tops of the copings but merely left propped up in the front raised bed behind the wall.

The wall appears to have been newly repaired / constructed and is in good order. I suspect that the original fence has not been re-fixed because adequate fixings could not be installed within the concrete copings. It should be possible to reinstate the fence but it will require bespoke fittings.

The gate is functional and in reasonable order. The decoration is breaking down and the gate does show signs of some minor corrosion, however it is generally in sound functional order. Redecoration will be necessary in the near future to prevent acceleration in the corrosion.

3.8 Outbuildings

The only outbuilding present is the timber shed within the front garden. This shed was not inspected in detail but appeared to be in sound order and functional. The timber has been treated and although the treatment is starting to break down the timber is generally free from rot or significant defect. This facility should prove satisfactory for general garden storage, although security may be an issue.

I do not know whether the garden shed is included within the sale of the house. You should ask your solicitor to confirm whether the shed is in fact being left by the current owner.

4. Internally

4.1 Roof void

Because of the two sloping sections of roof two roof voids have been created, one to either side although the two sections are in fact interconnected by a small gap beneath the central valley gutter. Access hatches have been provided to each roof void, one within the ensuite to the master bedroom and the second within the first floor hallway.

It is clear to see that the construction of the roof slopes is identical either side with a series of cut rafters extending from the party wall each side where the head of each rafter is placed within a pocket in the wall, down to a central bearing point adjacent to the outside edge of the gutters to either side.

To the left hand roof slope a series of timber collars have been installed which connect from the party wall to the feet of the timber rafters and have presumably been installed to stop any roof spread from the additional weight of the concrete tiles. 2 no similar collars have been installed to the roof slope on the right hand side although this is the extent of the installation in this void. I can confirm that I saw no sign of any roof spread to either slope which would indicate that the collars are doing their job.

From inspecting the roof timbers it would appear that they have not suffered from any significant bowing or distortion. There are some signs of minor deflection and some twisting to the rafters particularly to the right hand roof slope where additional collars have not been installed however the timbers generally appear satisfactory and free from signs of significant movement.

The timbers are necessarily bedded within the external walls and therefore the same comments apply regarding the timber ends in these locations as applies to the timber floor joists as detailed below. I can however confirm that although the timbers show signs of some staining and water marks, I saw no signs of significant deterioration or disintegration. There is however some wet rot and corresponding disintegration to the timber wall plate to the left hand roof void. This is only in isolated areas at present and does not appear to be of detriment to the roof structure. As detailed below, it is essential that remedial work be carried out immediately to prevent further deterioration.

Although ventilation has been provided to the roof by way of 2 no vent tiles externally to the right hand roof slope and 1 no to the left hand to the right hand side 1 no of these is used to the extract of the ensuite bathroom therefore leaving only one tile to serve the roof on each side. The amount of ventilation is wholly inadequate and I would recommend that additional ventilation is installed immediately.

The roof void when entered does have a very damp and musty smell to it and the environment is generally very damp. This environment, together with a lack of ventilation is perfect for wet and dry rot to propagate.

It can clearly be seen on the timbers that water ingress through the roof has taken place albeit it is impossible to tell whether this water ingress is historic or ongoing. At the time of my inspection the weather was dry and therefore I saw no evidence of current leaking and generally other than the chimneys and front parapet wall the majority of the roof areas appeared sound. Therefore I suspect that any staining is historic although I cannot categorically confirm this without inspecting the house during a time of heavy rainfall. What I can however confirm is that a large proportion of the roof timbers, particularly within the right hand roof void show signs of wet rot and white staining indicative of the fungi *Poria Vaillantii* and immediate treatment will be necessary. Provided that the source of the moisture ingress has been stopped and additional ventilation installed, this type of wet rot should cause no problems to the integrity of the timber, however should a reoccurrence of moisture occur the possibility of an outbreak of dry rot may be likely.

This type of wet rot is prevalent in warm stagnant conditions and thus the roof void is the perfect environment for it to propagate. The fungi should be at a stage where it can be treated using a fungicidal emulsion and as long as any water ingress has been stopped the timbers will dry out and should not lose any of their strength, however it is essential that in conjunction with treating the timbers a series of additional vents are installed within each roof slope to provide a greater degree of ventilation to prevent the onset of further rot. It is also essential that any damp ingress is rectified and thus the areas of the roof that require repair and are detailed above should be addressed.

A large proportion of the timbers were inaccessible or unexposed and therefore I could not assess them and therefore I cannot rule out the possibility that dry rot is present in areas of the roof which were hidden from view, particularly beneath the central valley gutter. During my inspection I did not see any areas of dry rot although wet rot was prevalent. However there is a distinct possibility that some areas of dry rot are present therefore I would recommend that as part of the process to treat the wet rot the entire area is assessed by a rot specialist to determine whether any further treatment or replacement of timbers is necessary

It is apparent within the roof void that the timber decking to the central valley gutter has recently been replaced with new timber. The pale softwood timber can clearly be seen against the older more weathered timber of the original roof structure. This timber generally appears to be in good order, well fixed and free from significant defect although the majority of the deck could not be seen but merely the up stand sections. I can confirm that I saw no evidence of rot to the lay boards which could be seen and they generally appear to be in satisfactory order.

It would appear that the roof rafters bear onto central timber beams spanning from the front to rear of the property. These beams do not correspond with structural walls beneath and therefore the support of the rafters at the ends is purely upon these beams themselves as

well the ceiling joists onto which the beams bear. This is not ideal however I can confirm that I saw no evidence of significant distortion or movement to the gutters or the ceilings beneath to indicate that the rafters are overloading the ceiling joists.

It would also appear that new timbers have been installed to the front hips of the roof. It is unclear as to why new timbers would be necessary although there is a possibility that these hip sections did not originally exist and were an add-on at a later date to the original roof although equally, there is a possibility that they were replaced due to deterioration of the original timbers. In any event, the timbers appear sound and in reasonable order and well fixed. I saw no evidence of significant defect. I was unable to get up to this section of roof at close quarters to test the brickwork for dampness however there were areas of "glistening" brickwork which could be indicative of some moisture ingress through the parapet above or the cornice to the front elevation. I cannot categorically confirm this but bearing in mind the condition of the parapet there is a distinct possibility that some moisture ingress is present. I can however confirm that there are no timbers in contact with this area and no dampness was registered at high level in the rooms directly beneath.

The roof voids have been provided with insulation between the ceiling joists. This insulation is of the fibreglass quilt type and is of reasonable thickness. It would appear that the original insulation has been retained but upgraded with an additional layer to bring the thickness up to approximately 150-200mm. This thickness would not comply with current regulations but will greatly improve the thermal insulation of the house and should prove satisfactory for your needs. If you wanted to upgrade the insulation further you could do so, however I suspect that you'll not find it necessary.

A timber wall plate has been inserted at the head of the parapet wall to the left hand roof slope onto which the timber rafters bear. This timber wall plate has rotted in places and is generally damp which would indicate that either water ingress is an issue in this area, or possibly the timbers became damp through previous ingress which has now been rectified, but due to the stagnant conditions the timber has not had a chance to dry out. In any event regardless of the cause, the timber has deteriorated and replacement of sections will be necessary in the near future. At present it does not appear to have had structural implications on the roof of the building however there is a distinct possibility if left unchecked that the deterioration could get worse.

It is apparent from the brickwork parapet walls within the roof void that timber packer sections have been installed between the brickwork courses at various intervals. This was common practice for buildings of this age and type and generally speaking the timber, although not ideal as a structural element, is performing perfectly adequately in this location. Problems do arise in damp conditions where the timber begins to rot and this can affect the stability of the walls. As with the remainder of the timber in the loft, the timber within the walls is damp and although in the areas I was able to inspect does not appear to be suffering badly from rot, if the position is not improved then the possibility of extensive rot infestation both wet and dry rot is significant and this could have potential implications on the structural stability of the wall. It is therefore imperative for a number of reasons that additional ventilation be installed within the roof as a matter of urgency and that a detailed assessment be carried out of the roof timbers and associated elements to ensure that they are structurally sound.

4.2 Floor construction

The ground floors to the property are of concrete construction although there appears to be an area to the dining section of the kitchen where it may be of suspended timber. It is unclear due to the presence of floor coverings however from walking upon the floor it retains a hollow sound which would be indicative of a suspended timber floor. It is not known why a single section would be suspended whereas the rest is of concrete and of course it may just be the way that the tiles are laid that has caused this hollow effect but it would certainly appear that this area is of suspended timber.

The first floors to the building are also of suspended timber with timber joists and boards. Floor coverings have been provided to the majority of the first floor but the boards were exposed within the rear bedrooms and could be clearly seen.

I can confirm that the concrete floors generally appeared sound and level and in reasonable order. I saw no signs of distortion or deflection which would be indicative of any structural movement.

In modern construction, it is common practice to install a damp proof membrane within concrete floors to prevent the possibility of damp penetrating through the floor. In a house of this age it is unlikely that such a membrane is present although this will very much depend upon whether the floor is original or not. I can however confirm that the floor registered no unduly high levels of dampness which would indicate that the floors are functioning satisfactorily.

The floors were covered in a number of floor coverings including carpet, timber block floor and tiled floors. Within the timber and tiled floors there was no evidence of movement to the coverings nor indeed cracking to the tiles or the grout which would indicate that the floors are sound and level and have not suffered any undue distortion since they were laid. The timber section of floor to the dining area again appeared sound and level and in reasonable order. I saw no cracking or distortion to the tiles or grout of this floor which would again indicate that the floor is sound and in reasonable order and has not suffered any undue deflection or movement.

In houses of this age and type it will necessarily be the case that floor joist ends are bedded into solid walls which may be damp. Under modern construction timber joists would be protected by a cavity or in solid construction would be wrapped in a waterproof material to prevent deterioration through damp. In properties of this age no such protection would have been afforded and therefore the joist ends will be bedded directly into masonry which has the potential to become damp if moisture penetration occurs externally.

I can confirm that at the time of my inspection I did not see any evidence of dampness or rot to secondary timbers such as skirting boards to indicate that dampness was a problem or indeed that rot had occurred. But on the basis of my assessment of the roof void and front wall there is a possibility that the walls are damp beneath the internal finishes, therefore the timber joists in contact with this dampness may have suffered from some rot. Clearly these joist ends are hidden from view and I cannot rule out the possibility that rot is indeed present. I can however confirm that the floor joists did not flex unduly or feel spongy when walked upon which is generally an indication that they are sound. I feel that the likelihood of some rot being present within the timbers is moderate but becomes greater the longer a defect is left before repair.

Where timber floors are in place at ground floor level it would normally be the case that ventilation is provided to prevent the build-up of stagnant air beneath the floor, in a similar vein to that within the roof void. This stagnant air can cause rot to the timbers and therefore it is advisable to create an air flow to prevent this build-up. In this particular area I can confirm that I saw no evidence of vent bricks externally to provide sub-floor ventilation and would recommend that some ventilation is installed to prevent the potential for the onset of rot. I can however confirm that when walked upon the floors did not deflect unduly which would indicate that the floors are sound and in reasonable order at present. I can also confirm that I saw no evidence of defect in ancillary elements such as skirtings to indicate that rot was a problem in this area. Nevertheless, I cannot completely rule out the possibility that some rot is present in hidden timbers and would recommend that some ventilation be installed, particularly bearing in mind the current issues within the roof.

The suspended timber floors at first floor level showed some signs of deflection and distortion but this would be classed as usual for a house of this age and type. The floors were solid and free from significant deflection when walked upon which would indicate that they are sound and in reasonable order. There was no evidence of significant sloping to the floors which would be indicative of severe structural movement.

In the rear bedrooms the floorboards have been exposed and treated with a wood varnish / stain. These floorboards generally appear to be in good sound order and free from significant defect. Some boards are loose and will require re-fixing and gaps are present to the boards but once again this should be expected for a house of this age and type. These gaps will produce draughts by this will be limited on the first floor. It is possible to fill the gaps using an appropriate wood putty / paste if the draughts become an issue. However I suspect that you will find the current position perfectly satisfactory. I can also confirm that I saw neither evidence of significant woodworm infestation nor indeed any rot to the exposed timbers. I comment further on timber treatment in section 5.

On the whole the floors appeared sound and in reasonable order.

4.3 Staircase

A timber staircase has been installed extending from ground to first floor level. This staircase is constructed of timber with timber strings, treads, risers and balustrading. The full extent of the staircase could not be seen due to carpet covering however the staircase appeared sound and well fixed when walked upon and generally functional. The staircase handrail at low level moves a little when held but generally is sound and in reasonable order.

The underside of the staircase is boarded out to create an under stair cupboard. Unfortunately I was unable to inspect the underside of the treads and risers to the stairs due to a plasterboard soffit having been installed. This prevented me from assessing whether the timber was suffering woodworm or any such timber infestation. It is common for woodworm to propagate in areas under stairs and often this can have a detrimental effect on the staircase however I cannot confirm in this instance whether woodworm is present. What I can however confirm is that the staircase appeared solid and in good order and I would not envisage any issues with the staircase.

4.4 Internal walls

The internal walls are a mix of solid masonry and stud partition. All the walls are plastered and decorated.

The walls throughout generally appear to be sound and in good order. They are free from significant cracking and distortion and generally appear to be well decorated. There are areas where cracking has occurred to the partition walls in particular the junction between the front bedroom wall and the main front wall of the house. This is due to differential movement of the stud partition in relation to the masonry wall and has created a vertical crack at this junction. This is quite common for movement between different materials which expand and contract at different rates and does not give me cause for concern. Equally similar hairline cracks are present to the cupboard off the first floor landing.

There are also cracks evident in both the rear first floor bedrooms, one to the right hand bedroom beneath the right hand side of the window and another within the left hand bedroom between the left hand head of the window and the right hand head of the door. These cracks are relatively minor in nature but do show that there has been some movement of the house, either now or in the past. This cracking corresponds with external cracking to the render on the rear of the property and may be indicative of some form of structural movement either historic or ongoing. I have of course commented on this in greater detail within section 3.4 - External Walls.

There are signs of distortion to the heads of some of the internal doors, particularly the front bedroom and the main bathroom doors which would be indicative of some downward movement in these areas, the doors and corresponding walls at first floor level do not line up directly with walls downstairs and are therefore not fully supported. These walls are of stud partition and are of limited weight but they do create an imposed load and it may be the additional weight that has caused the movement or it might be indicative of some structural movement. In any event there is no sign of renewed cracking which would indicate that ongoing structural problems are not an issue. There has clearly been some movement and

the majority of door heads do show some misalignment but this has to be expected of a period house. Corresponding movement of the sitting room door matches that of the bedroom and a small hairline crack is present, although it does not give me cause for concern. It is minor in nature and does not appear to be indicative of any significant structural movement.

A property of this age would not have been provided with a damp proof course (dpc) to prevent rising damp, although over the years many properties have had a dpc retrospectively fitted by way of a chemical injection. I have no way of knowing whether such an injection has been carried out but I would recommend that you ask your solicitor to find out and if one has been installed, you should ask whether it comes with an insurance backed guarantee to which you can gain the benefit.

I can confirm that I did register high levels of dampness to the front wall within the sitting room which would indicate that a dpc is not present, however there were no unduly high readings to the rear of the house.

It would appear that if a dpc has been installed, it has now failed and remedial action will be required. If no dpc has been installed then I would recommend that one is, to eliminate the damp ingress. At present the dampness does not manifest itself as visible damp patches or deterioration internally which will hopefully mean that the plaster and decoration within the sitting room need not be replaced at the same time. I cannot however rule out the possibility that the plaster has become hygroscopic which will mean that it will never dry out, even after a dpc has been installed. In this circumstance you will have to decide whether you wish to live with the condition of the plaster or replace it. I reiterate that at present the plaster appears sound and should hopefully dry out with no further repair being required.

4.5 Ceilings

The ceilings throughout the house, but particularly to the first floor appear to be relatively new. In a house of this age I would normally expect to find lath and plaster ceilings but the current ceilings would mainly appear to be of plasterboard which have been decorated. This indicates that the ceilings were replaced throughout the house as part of an extensive refurbishment in the past. Either that or the original ceilings have been particularly well preserved with no sign of significant cracking.

The ceilings throughout generally appear to be in good order and in sound condition. I can confirm that on the whole the ceilings were free from any cracking or distortion and generally sound. The ceiling within the right hand dining area does show some signs of cracking beneath the decoration, probably through movement of the floor joists above but this cracking has been repaired in the past and is generally satisfactory. You will probably find that the cracks reopen over time and repair will be warranted but the ceilings should prove serviceable if maintained. I suspect that this ceiling is in fact original.

At ground floor level cornices have been retained to the ceilings as too has the ceiling rose within the main sitting room and the decorative arch between the hallway and kitchen area. These cornices generally appear to be in good order and free from significant cracking. There are areas where the joints of the cornice are starting to come apart and there is evidence of historic repair but generally they are in sound order and free from significant defect.

On the whole the condition of the ceilings would indicate that the property has not suffered any undue movement or distortion since the last cycle of redecoration which would indicate that on the whole the house is structurally sound, despite the evidence of some minor cracking to the rear wall

5. Timber decay

A Number of the significant structural components within the property are of timber construction, namely the roof rafters, valley gutter, wall packers and the suspended timber ground and first floors. Consequently the risk to the building of any outbreak of timber decay would have serious consequences.

In a house of this age I would expect to find infestation by wood boring insects. You should check through your solicitor that treatments have been undertaken and if they have not then you should make allowance to carry out the treatments prior to your taking occupation. The treatments are somewhat disruptive and it is advisable not to occupy the building during treatment. Old forms of the treatments used to give off an unpleasant smell, but new modern water based treatments are far less obnoxious and occupation is now possible the same day, although it is still advisable to wait 48hrs before occupying if possible.

If you discover that treatments have already been carried out then you should check that the guarantees which exist are from companies which are in a position to back them up.

As far as rot is concerned, in the majority of areas I am pleased to say that I saw no evidence at all of either wet or dry rot in visible primary or secondary timbers. There were however a number of areas where rot was visible most notably the roof timbers.

Within the roof void there are signs of damp staining and condensation and although this does not appear to have had a structural effect on the timbers at present, there is every chance, if the damp ingress has not been rectified, that more severe rot will occur in the future. It is therefore essential that these areas are monitored and the necessary repairs carried out immediately if leaking is still an issue as well as being properly ventilated.

I reiterate that the majority of the structural timber elements were hidden from view and I cannot completely rule out the possibility that some rot is present and based upon the condition of the property, the possibility is moderate.

The rot fungi thrive in warm, humid and stagnant atmospheres which are usually in enclosed spaces and so it goes without saying that rot can exist in areas which are concealed. In fact, the fungus can even be concealed by material that is contaminated. As a result the presence of wet or dry rot can never be ruled out but again I reiterate that in this particular house I feel the risks must be regarded as fairly high.

I have mentioned earlier in the report the possible contamination of the floor joist ends where they are bedded into external walls and the same applies to timber lintels which may be built into the structure above window and door openings. Penetrating damp can contaminate these but again I saw no problems although you must appreciate that I was not able to see the timbers themselves. If therefore at any time in the future you discover any evidence at all of either wet or dry rot then you must immediately take appropriate action to ensure that proper treatments are carried out.

6. Deleterious materials

Since the early 1980's, the property and construction industry has evolved and adopted a list of materials, which, for one reason or another, have been labelled deleterious and/or hazardous to health and safety. Some of these materials only become deleterious and hazardous due to the particular circumstances of their use and are not inherently deleterious or hazardous in themselves.

Materials that have been branded "deleterious" have usually been so classed because they either:

- a) Pose a direct risk to health and safety of persons occupying or visiting a particular property (e.g. asbestos) or
- b) Can be detrimental to the structural performance of a building (e.g. High alumina Cement in concrete)

Some deleterious materials might fall into more than one of the foregoing categories. Few of the deleterious materials given below can be detected with the naked eye alone. Often sampling and testing of a component or element is required to confirm the presence or absence of a material. The materials marked with an asterisk below are, in general, those materials that require sampling and testing to establish their existence with certainty. A list of common deleterious materials would be as follows;

- Nickel sulphide inclusions in toughened glazing
- High alumina cement (HAC) when used in load bearing concrete components and elements
- Composite cladding panels in roofs and walls
- Chloride additives when used in pre-cast or in-situ concrete*
- Calcium silicate bricks or tiles (also known as sand/lime or flint/lime bricks)
- Mundic blocks and mundic concrete
- Woodwool slabs when used as permanent shuttering to in-situ cast structural concrete
- Lead based paint used in locations that could result in ingestion, inhalation or absorption of the material*
- Lead used for drinking water pipework except when used as solder to pipe fittings
- Sea dredged aggregates or other aggregates used in reinforced concrete which do not comply with British Standards 882: 1992 and aggregates for use in concrete which does not comply with the provisions of British Standards: Specification 8110: 1985*
- Asbestos in any raw form or asbestos based products
- Manmade mineral fibres in materials when these fibres are loose and have a diameter of 3 microns or less and a length of between 5 and 100 microns*
- Urea Formaldehyde foam in large quantities used, in particular, as cavity insulation (due to vapours released from the foam).

In a building of this type I would not expect to find any substances which may have been used as additives to concrete to facilitate or speed up the process. Consequently chemicals such as high alumina cement, calcium chloride etc. would almost certainly not have been used in a building like this, although it is never possible to rule out the possibility completely. There were certainly no signs of deterioration as a result.

The use of asbestos in construction materials was banned in the 1980's and their use had declined by the end of the 1970's when the Building Regulations came into force. It is not inconceivable that some asbestos containing materials have been used in newer properties, where a stockpile of material was used up rather than wasted, although these circumstances would be classed as limited. New materials were introduced to take the place of those

containing asbestos and unfortunately they often have the same visual characteristics, therefore the only way to be sure that they do not contain asbestos is to have them tested.

In this particular property, I cannot completely rule out the possibility that some asbestos is present within the property. Indeed there is a distinct possibility that over the lifespan of the building asbestos has been used in many areas but is hidden from view, although by the nature of them being concealed it would reduce any risks significantly. The risks in a property of this age would be regarded as minimal but cannot be ruled out entirely. Indeed I have mentioned the possibility that the verge boarding to the roof may be of a material that contains asbestos.

If at any time you are concerned regarding asbestos then I would recommend that you appoint a suitably qualified asbestos consultant to carry out a detailed survey of the property and carry out any remedial work as recommended. Of course such a survey may already exist and you can certainly ask the question.

Fibreglass insulation has been used in the roof space. This could be regarded as a harmful substance because it is sometimes a skin irritant. If you are concerned about this you should always wear protective clothing and a mask when entering the roof space.

7. Environmental hazards

I indicate below my findings and advice regarding certain issues of an environmental nature. The issues identified below should not be considered an exhaustive list of matters to be considered.

7.1 Land contamination

I have not prepared an environmental audit for the property. My findings are detailed below.

There is no evidence to suggest that the development has been constructed on land which in the past has been used for any purpose that may have resulted in contamination of the ground by the dumping of industrial or commercial waste. On this basis I believe that the risk is extremely low that any contamination exists at the property. But if you wish to make absolutely certain on this point then you should commission an environmental study.

7.2 Flooding risk

The area is elevated from sea level and therefore the risk of flooding would be considered extremely low, however if you have any concerns then it would be possible for you to commission a flood risk assessment of the area.

7.3 Trees proximity

The proximity of trees to a building can give rise to concern because structural damage can be caused by root systems growing around, under and sometimes through foundations, subterranean walls and drains. The risk of damage caused by tree roots depends on;

- The proximity of trees to the building or drains concerned
- The height, age and species of the tree.
- The design and depth of a building's foundations
- The type of sub-soil

There is a raised border within the rear courtyard garden. Within this raised border a tree has grown and this tree is starting to get relatively large for the space in which it is kept. I would recommend that the tree is not allowed to grow any bigger than it currently is and indeed it may be advisable to reduce the size of the tree by a reasonable margin to ensure that the roots do not cause problems to the main house or the kitchen extension. I can confirm that at

present there is no sign of the tree causing damage to either the raised border or adjacent boundary and retaining walls however if the tree is allowed to grow too large then it may start causing problems.

7.4 Radon risk

Radon is a natural radioactive gas. You cannot see, hear, feel or taste it. It comes from the minute amounts of uranium that occur naturally in all rocks and soils. Radon is present in all parts of the UK, although the gas disperses outdoors so levels are generally very low.

We all breathe it in throughout our lives - for most UK residents, radon accounts for half of their total annual radiation dosage.

However, geological conditions in certain areas can lead to higher than average levels. Some of the highest radon levels have been found in the southwest, but levels well above average have been found in some other parts of the UK. Exposure to particularly high levels of radon may increase the risk of developing lung cancer.

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has advised that indoor radon above an Action Level of 200 becquerels per cubic metre should be reduced. Most homes in the UK have fairly low radon levels, with an average of about 20 becquerels per cubic metre.

Without testing a particular property it is impossible to determine the level of Radon present. It can be the case that two adjoining properties will have vastly different levels and thus the only way to rule out the possibility of high levels of Radon being present would be to carry out a test.

The HPA conducts radon surveys for government departments, local councils, other organizations, and private householders. Therefore if you are concerned about Radon you should consult this organization.

8. Generally

In accordance with our Conditions of Engagement, we have not inspected woodwork or other parts of the structure which are unexposed or inaccessible and we are therefore unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defect.

Despite a thorough investigation, minor defects and problems such as faulty tap washers, vibrating noisy pipes etc, are not always apparent until physical occupation has commenced. Also, defects sometimes appear as a result of extreme weather conditions which were not experienced at the time of our inspection. We cannot therefore guarantee that there are no defects other than those mentioned in the foregoing Report.

We have not been instructed to carry out tests, or to arrange for the carrying out of tests to establish the level of radon gas present within the building; to establish whether or not there are contaminants present in the soil or substrata; to establish whether the building contains high alumina cement, calcium chloride, asbestos, lead based paints or any other deleterious materials, extensive carbonation of concrete or insufficient depth of concrete cover to reinforcement. These tests and reports can be organised, upon receipt of your specific instructions.

This Report is provided for the sole use of the named Client and is confidential to the Client; any persons other than the Client relying on the contents of this Report do so at their own risk.

This Report must be read in full and extracts and lists must not be read or used in isolation.

9. Summary

It is clear that the house has been improved and refurbished over the years and repairs have been carried out historically. There are a number of defects of which you should be aware, however in general the house has been well looked after and retains a very nice feel.

The most significant issue relates to the roof timbers within the roof voids to the house. It is apparently the case that the current owners were advised to introduce ventilation to the roof when problems were identified to them. However the introduction of the vent tiles to each roof slope appears not to have solved the problem and therefore it will be necessary to install further ventilation, in order to halt the onset of rot which is currently affecting a large proportion of the roof's timbers. It is clear that some water penetration has occurred through the roof in the past although the roof externally generally appears to be in good order and on this basis it would be reasonable to assume that any water ingress has now ceased although I cannot categorically confirm this without inspecting the roof during heavy rainfall. It is my belief that the rot to the timbers is primarily as a result of condensation and as long as additional ventilation is installed this should rectify the issue, however it is imperative that additional ventilation is installed immediately to prevent the potential for the timbers to deteriorate beyond repair or indeed for an outbreak of dry rot to occur.

There is evidence of dampness to the main front wall within the sitting room. It is apparently the case that the owner had a damp proofing injection carried out and has guarantees for the work however I can confirm that the property did register high levels of dampness using a damp meter which would indicate that either the damp course has failed or possibly there is an additive within the plaster or masonry which affects the readings on the damp meter. On the basis that the damp meter was used elsewhere and did not register high levels of dampness it is my assumption that there are no additives which have affected the meter and thus dampness is still in place. This indicates that the damp course has failed. In this regard you should ask the vendor to contact the company that carried out the original damp injection and ask them to come back and investigate the position and carry out any remedial work as necessary.

Within the house there are indications of slight movement to door heads and floors etc and there are also a number of minor hairline cracks, particularly to the rear wall of the house both externally and within the first floor bedrooms. These cracks would be indicative of some structural movement to the house but unfortunately I cannot confirm whether these cracks are as a consequence of historic or ongoing movement without carrying out a period of monitoring to the building. The cracks are relatively minor in nature and common for a property of this age. Due to the age of the render it is likely that they are historic and caused by general movement which has now ceased although the position will need to be monitored and if the cracks get any worse then remedial work may be necessary. I would hope that they are merely cracks which have occurred to weak spots within the elevation and will not get any worse however you will appreciate that I cannot rule out the possibility that any movement is still ongoing. I would however recommend that the cracks are filled to prevent any water ingress.

There are areas to the front elevation where render has been applied over sandstone plinths and string courses and this render is now blown and coming away from the background structure. This deterioration will continue and remedial work will be required periodically. I suspect that this blown render is as a result of the background material being poorly prepared before the render was applied. As and when re-rendering or patch repair is necessary it is essential that the correct mix of render is used and also that the background material is properly prepared in order to provide a sound base to prevent deterioration occurring again.

The property is not without its defects but on the whole it does not appear to have suffered from any significant structural movement. Periodic repair and maintenance will be required as it would on any house but the property is generally in good condition and you should not find that any significant work is required for the short to medium term, other than reactive maintenance and repair to the specific defects as mentioned above.

If anything is unclear or you have any concerns regarding the contents of this report, then I would urge you to give me a call before making any final decisions regarding your purchase.

Signed:

Andrew J Hodge MRICS RMaPS
A J Hodge Associates

Date:

SAMPLE

Appendix A

Photographs

(Please note that the photo sizes have been altered to fit the pages)



Un-rendered house to left of terrace



Roof



Cracking to rear elevation



Wall and cracked render to rear garden wall



Damaged render and paintwork to front elevation



Wet rot to front sash window



Wet rot and staining to roof rafters



Sitting room



Rear right hand bedroom



Entrance hall



Front garden

Appendix B

Scope of Service

SCOPE OF SERVICE

BUILDING SURVEYS

1.0 Scope of service

1.1 We will visually inspect the premises identified and prepare on behalf of the client a Building Survey detailing the condition and any significant defects in the premises. The building survey will be prepared with due regard to the Client's interest in the premises, as far as this has been communicated and all other information we are provided relating to the building's condition of repair. The report will be prepared in a format suitable to assess any significant defects, establish their severity or if further specialist investigations are required. One copy of the Building Survey will normally be provided unless otherwise agreed.

1.2 The survey will be limited to accessible areas of the premises identified. The building survey will deal with the demised area of any leased premises. Brief comment may be made on common areas covered by service charges or management fees as identified in our Engagement Letter, but only in so far as these areas are accessible to us at the time of our inspection.

2.0 Documents

2.1 We will first inspect all documents provided by the Client that are relevant to the instruction. Late disclosure of documents may have cost implications in respect of our fees and acting on our advice.

3.0 Limitations of inspection

3.1 We will identify items during any site inspection that are relevant to the instruction, based on the examination of elements that can be seen without damaging the property, its decorations or contents or testing. We will use best endeavours to see relevant parts of the property including reasonably accessible roof spaces, ducts and traps. Without completely dismantling a building it is impossible to inspect everything. The following ensures that no misunderstandings occur between client and surveyor.

3.2 We will not inspect parts that are covered, unexposed or inaccessible. Fitted carpets or floorboards will not be lifted except at the client's request. Written permission is required from the vendor/lessor. Heavy furniture will not be moved unless the vendor/lessor agrees. Suitable assistance may be necessary. Manhole covers will not be lifted unless of light duty, easily accessible and in good condition. We will therefore be unable to report that such parts of the property are free from defect.

3.3 Services (ie drains, electrics, gas, water, heating etc.) will, where possible, be inspected and appropriate recommendations will be made. Testing can be arranged at extra cost. (services are not considered as part of a main elements survey).

3.4 Boroscopes or other fibre-optic probes may be used for specific problems notified before the survey. Additional costs will be involved. The written consent of the vendor/lessor will be needed beforehand.

3.5 Structural calculations are not undertaken as a matter of course but structural components will be examined where possible and suitable recommendations will be made if appropriate.

- 3.6 Comments are not made on the more superficial aspects of the building such as cracked glass, chipped plaster, etc. unless it is relevant to a more serious defect.
- 3.7 No inquiries will be made into the quality of the land to establish whether it is contaminated or affected by naturally occurring Radon gas.
- 3.8 Despite a thorough investigation, minor defects and problems such as faulty tap washers, vibrating noisy pipes etc, are not always apparent. Also, defects sometimes appear as a result of extreme weather conditions or time passing which were not present at the time of our inspection. We cannot therefore guarantee that defects of this type will be included in the building survey or that there are no defects other than those mentioned in our report.
- 3.9 Any parts of the building not accessible with a 3.2m surveyors ladder, buried underground, or hidden from view will not be closely inspected unless specifically requested and special arrangements made. Where high level (roof) access or inspection of concealed areas is required by the client this is to be agreed prior to our inspection. Contractors engaged to provide services such as provision of a cherry picker, lifting of manholes or testing of drain runs can be instructed by ourselves on behalf of the client; the payment of a contractors invoice will be the sole responsibility of the client.
- 3.10 High parts of the building (chimney stacks, gutters etc.) will be inspected from ground level usually through binoculars. Some defects may exist which are not visible from this position, so no comment can be made regarding these.
- 3.11 Unless otherwise stated the fee quoted is based on a single visit to the site/building. If, due to matters outside our control, we have made a second or subsequent visit to site due to full access not being available as informed, we reserve the right to charge additional fees for abortive time.
- 3.12 The inspection will be limited to the premises shown on documents provided. Where plans are not available, the surveyor will make assumptions as to the extent of the property.
- 4.0 Exclusions**
- 4.1 It is rarely possible to inspect all parts of a building but advice will be given from the evidence available, although it may be necessary to incorporate some caveats or exclusions.
- 4.2 We cannot comment upon the condition of those parts of the structure which are concealed, hidden or inaccessible.
- 4.3 Timber decay: both wet and dry rot fungi and the larvae of woodboring insects can be active without there being any visible evidence. It is impossible to guarantee that these defects do not exist in a property. The level of risk will be assessed.
- 4.4 A general test cannot be applied to the plumbing installation to determine weak points or potential leaks. Only exposed pipework can be inspected.
- 4.5 Wall cavities cannot be inspected to determine the condition of metal ties or whether or not there are any obstructions which could give rise to penetrating dampness.

4.6 Damp proof courses should be provided above windows and external door openings and at window and external door reveals. Clearly these cannot be inspected.

4.7 Foundations cannot be inspected without excavation so guarantees cannot be given as to their condition or even their existence. Comments on the nature of the subsoil will be based only on knowledge, if any, of the area in which the property is located.

5.0 Testing and sampling

5.1 Unless specifically instructed we will not carry out or arrange for the carrying out, of any sampling or testing. No testing or investigation will be undertaken to determine the presence of radon gas, any contamination, high alumina cement, calcium chloride, carbonation, insufficient depth of concrete cover to reinforcement, lead based paint, deleterious materials etc. These tests and reports can be organised upon receipt of your specific instructions. We will charge an additional fee for organising these tests and payment of any contractor's or specialist's invoices will remain the sole responsibility of the client.

5.2 No testing or investigation will be undertaken in relation to toxic mould and asbestos. The client acknowledges that all risks and liabilities relating to toxic mould and asbestos, howsoever arising, remain with the client and the client shall take such steps as it deems necessary to insure against or otherwise address such risks and liabilities. We can however make suggestions for further investigation by the client where necessary based upon our professional opinion.

6.0 Legal and Statutory

6.1 We will not carry out or arrange for the carrying out, of any examination or assessment in respect of statutory, service provider, Local Authority searches or health and safety information or other legislative requirements as they are the function of your solicitor. We may comment on some of these elements however cannot be an expert in every area or be held liable for any omission. We can organise inspections to comment upon particular legislation following receipt of your specific instructions. We will charge an additional fee for organising these inspections and payment of any contractor's or specialist's invoices will remain the sole responsibility of the client.

6.2 We will not carry out or arrange for any examination or assessment of legal documents. We advise that your solicitors deal with such matters. Where relevant, we may comment on some legal matters however cannot be an expert in every area or be held liable for any omission.

6.3 Our Report is provided for the sole use of the named Client and is confidential to the Client and his professional advisers; any persons other than the Client relying on the contents of our Report do so at their own risk.

6.4 Our Report must be read in full and extracts and lists must not be read or used in isolation.

6.5 The Consultant shall have no liability to the Client in respect of breaches by the Consultant of its obligations hereunder relating to or in connection with asbestos howsoever arising provided always that the foregoing shall not apply to liability arising from claims in respect of death or personal injury which shall not be limited.

6.6 The Client acknowledges that all risks relating to asbestos howsoever arising remain with the Client and the Client shall take such steps as it deems necessary to insure against or otherwise address such risks.

7.0 Additional inspections and specialist services

7.1 All consultants, contractors and other professionals required during the course of the service will be instructed, with prior agreement, on behalf of the client who will be responsible for the direct payment of their fees, costs and expenses.

7.2 Unless specifically instructed we will not inspect mechanical, electrical or other service installations. We may make general comment on these items however no specialist examination or testing will be undertaken. These tests and reports can be organised upon receipt of your specific instructions. We will charge an additional fee for organising these tests and payment of any contractor's or specialist's invoices will remain the sole responsibility of the client.

8.0 Cost of Works

8.1 Cost of works figures where provided, unless expressly stated, are subject to our limitations upon budget estimates as follows:-

8.2 All estimates are current prices and no adjustments have been made for future inflation.

8.3 If elements of the work are undertaken individually the total cost may exceed the overall budget estimate.

8.4 All estimates are quoted as budget estimates only and are not to be thought of as a substitute for obtaining competitive quotations from reputable contractors. If exact costs are required they will need to be determined by inviting the submission of builders' estimates.

8.5 No costs have been included for any investigative works.

8.6 Estimates do not include VAT, professional fees or statutory charges.

8.7 No allowance has been made for out of hours working or any associated charges likely to be incurred e.g. security.

8.8 No costs have been included regarding above and below ground drainage or other services within the building including heating, ventilation, mechanical and electrical, plant and equipment.

8.9 We have not included costs associated with the discovery, removal or consequent delays to works in connection with asbestos or other deleterious materials.

Appendix C

Estate Agent Particulars

SAMPLE