Building Survey

of

Property Address

as at

Date

for

Client

Prepared by:
Adrian Brooks Associates
Park House
111 Uxbridge Road
Ealing
W5 5LB

T: 0208 840 5445
E: survey@adrianbrooks.co.uk
W: www.adrianbrooks.co.uk

Further to your instructions we have pleasure in enclosing our survey report on the above property. For the purposes of the report, directions, room locations and the expressions left and right hand side, refer to viewing the property from the front boundary/street.

1.00 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The property is a ……..

It is of traditional construction of brick walls with a timber pitched roof with timber and/or concrete floors.

2.00 EXTERNALLY

2.01 Roof Coverings

Main Pitched Roof

The roof coverings are probably the original. Continuous repair could be carried out, but the frequency of repair will increase with time, and it would be more cost effective to carry out complete replacement in the foreseeable future. When carrying this out it is advisable to carry out any other repairs at roof level whilst scaffolding is erected.

The mortar beds to the ridge and hips are generally in fair condition, although in places these appeared to have become somewhat friable and fallen away, and some localised re-pointing and repair is advisable.

Back Addition Pitched Roof

At the rear of the property there is also a back addition roof, and is of similar construction, and covered with the same materials.

Felt Flat Roof

There is also a flat roof, which has been covered in roofing felt, with corresponding flashings at the abutments and edges. It is not possible to be certain how old the roof coverings are, but if well maintained, felt roofing will last for 10-15 years from new, and you should therefore anticipate replacement in the foreseeable future.

2.02 Parapet Walls, Chimney Stacks, Flashings & Soakers

The roof is built between party walls, which project above the roof to form party parapet walls, and incorporate brick chimney stacks. The party parapet walls are brick with brick on edge copings, and require some repair, principally re-pointing. Parapets are subject to deterioration because of their high degree of exposure and lack of lateral restraint. It is important that the joints to the parapets are in good condition, otherwise water can percolate through the joints and cause damage and eventually dampness to the interior. If sufficiently bad they should be rebuilt with a damp-proof membrane under the coping bricks or tiles.

Chimneystacks are of brick construction with terracotta pots. They have some slight leaning, caused by sulphate attack from burning solid fuel, and is usual in properties of this age. However this is within acceptable tolerances, and overall they are considered to be satisfactory, although some re-pointing and repair is required. I

The flaunching (which is the cement pointing around the chimney pots and keeping them in place) is not clearly visible from ground level, or through binoculars, so its condition cannot be commented on, but typically would be weathered and cracked requiring some repair, so this should be anticipated. The pots should be fitted with ventilator cowls if not in use, or if in use with a gas fire, a proprietary pot fitted as

recommended by the appliance manufacturer. Flues with gas fires fitted should have a liner installed, but it was not possible to determine whether a flue liner has been installed.

Flashings, where seen, between the roof, chimney stacks and parapets are generally lead. They are in reasonable condition for their age, but if the roof is to be re-covered they should be replaced.

2.03 Main Walls

Solid Brick Walls

The main walls are solid brick, approximately 240mm in thickness.

Over the years the property has suffered moderate structural movement, manifesting itself in minor cracking. This is a common feature of properties of this age, but the movement appears to be an established feature, although we cannot rule out the possibility of further seasonal movement occurring. On the basis of our single inspection we consider that this type of defect is common in buildings of this age and locality and that the extent of the movement is within acceptable limits.

There are stone sills to the window openings. Some of the detail has eroded, but more importantly the drip (a small groove to the underside) which is designed to throw water clear of the face of the wall, has worn away in places. This means that water cascading down the window onto the sill will spill over the edge and wash down over the brickwork below the sill, possibly causing damp in the wall beneath the sill. If any damp was detected it will be reported under “Damp”. The ideal solution would be to replace the sills, but that is not practical unless the windows are to be replaced.

Where seen, brick arches and lintels above doors and windows are in satisfactory condition.

Mortar pointing between the bricks was examined for cracking and integrity. It was found to be generally in satisfactory condition, although minor isolated repairs are required.

Render and pebbledash was randomly hammer tested where accessible at ground level only. This was found to be generally in satisfactory order, but there were some patches of hollow and off-key render. Ideally these hollow patches would be cut out and repaired.

2.04 Damp-Proof Course & Sub-Floor Ventilation

A damp-proof course is required to prevent ground moisture rising, through the process of osmosis, into the interior of the building and causing dampness. Good practice and current regulations require it to be a minimum of 150mm from the external ground level. In a property of this age, it is likely that the original dpc was slate, but that a chemical dpc has subsequently been installed, for which a guarantee may still be valid.

This property has timber floors throughout, for which sub-floor ventilation is required. This is provided, but the air-bricks are generally blocked and should be cleared.

2.05 Windows, Doors & External Joinery

Windows are traditional sash windows. Sash windows of this type do have a reputation of being difficult to maintain, since the frames contain voids and areas of hidden timberwork where latent defects may be present. It has been our experience

that they can be affected by dry rot on the inside of the box frames due to rainwater penetration between the timber frames and brick reveals. Such defects are often unidentifiable until they reach serious proportions.

Overall it is recommended that they either be replaced of given a substantial overhaul.

Double-Glazed Windows

Windows are generally double-glazed UPVC or aluminium, in older properties usually replacing the original windows.

We would draw your attention to the fact that sealed double glazed units can fail, which leads to condensation between the two panes of glass, which over time evaporates and leaves a calcium deposit between the sealed panes of glass. Although there was no evidence of this, unless the glass is perfectly clean, this masks small instances of condensation or calcium deposits between the panes, so we cannot categorically say that they are all perfect.

Timber Casement Windows

Windows are generally timber casement windows, which are in satisfactory condition for their age. There appears to have been some minor repair using filler, but at the present time this is satisfactory, although you should be aware that this is rarely a long-term solution since eventually water will seep around the repair.

Steel Windows

Windows are of steel 'Crittall' design, popular in this period as original windows or replacements for timber. Glazing in steel windows has a tendency to crack due to the pressure exerted by corrosion of the frames. They also provide very poor thermal insulation and attendant condensation problems. It is recommended that all of these be replaced with modern double-glazed units.

When viewed from ground level, timber soffites, fascias, barge boards etc. at roof level appeared to be in satisfactory condition. However it is often found upon close inspection that the fascia behind the gutter is not regularly painted, which makes it prone to rot if leaks or overflows are occurring to the guttering. You should therefore be prepared for repair or replacement in these areas.

2.06 External Decorations

These are gloss paint to woodwork and metalwork, with masonry paint to stonework and render where appropriate.

The condition of the decorations is considered to be satisfactory at the present time, but we recommend that redecoration is carried out every 3 years to prevent rot and decay of the substrates.

2.07 External Plumbing

Gutters & downpipes are uPVC. uPVC rainwater goods of this type tend to suffer from a high degree of thermal movement that sometimes results in the joints puling apart. It will probably be necessary to periodically remake the joints to maintain a watertight seal.

2.08 Drainage

Mains drainage is laid to the property, but no test has been undertaken. It appears to be a combined system where surface water, waste and foul water all discharge to the

same sub-soil disposal system to the main sewer.

We managed to raise some of the manhole covers. The interior of the chamber(s) was found to be in satisfactory condition, and the drainage was found to be in a relatively clean and satisfactory condition, and free from blockages.

2.09 Gardens, Boundaries & Outhouses

We do not intend to report on any great detail in this section. It is not apparent from the on-site inspections which boundaries form part of the demised premises, and recommend that you clarify this with your solicitor. The condition of boundaries is stated, but this does not imply any liability for repair or maintenance.

At the front, boundary walls are brick and generally in satisfactory condition. At the rear, they are timber fences. There are significant defects, from missing fence panels to rot in some of the posts.

In the gardens are (how many) trees, approximately (distance) from the property. They appear to be 'Cypress' trees, of which Leylandii is the most notorious, and can be very damaging to buildings. Our recommendation is that they be removed.

3.00 INTERNALLY

3.01 Roof Structure/Roof Space

Access to the roof space is via an access hatch.

In this property the structure is a hand-constructed pitched timber roof, comprising rafters, wall plates and ridge board. Purlins are used at the mid-span of the rafters to reduce the deflection, with struts and bracings supported by the partitions below.

Where seen internally, the roof timbers, and the structure generally, are in satisfactory condition. There is some discoloration to the timbers, possibly due to previous water ingress or condensation.

The feet of the rafters would typically bear onto timber wall plates which are correctly fixed to the top of the external walls.

It is important to maintain adequate ventilation to roof spaces to prevent condensation forming and possible rot occurring, and is now a requirement of the Building Regulations. It is normal practice when re-roofing these days, to incorporate ventilators, sometimes at the ridge and eaves.

The chimney flues pass through the roof space. If chimney breasts below have been removed, the remaining section of the flues above should be adequately supported, typically using metal “gallows” brackets bolted to the party wall. It has not been possible to confirm that this has been carried out satisfactorily, but if you proceed with the purchase should be checked, and if necessary, installed.

It has not been possible to inspect the interior structure of flat roofs and we cannot therefore determine whether ventilation should be provided. Flat roofs are generally of two types; a cold roof where the insulation is provided below the roof structure, and these should be ventilated; or a warm roof where the insulation is provided above the roof structure, and these should NOT be ventilated, provided an adequate vapour barrier is provided at ceiling level.

3.02 Ceilings

These are the original lathe and plaster, which is brittle and prone to deterioration, and over time the plaster cracks away from the timber lathe background, and therefore there are loose patches where the key with the background has been lost. This causes unevenness and cracking beneath the decorations, which is perfectly normal. At the present time we consider these to be in satisfactory condition for their age, and replacement is not necessary.

3.03 Internal Walls & Partitions

At ground floor the internal partitions are generally of load-bearing construction providing intermediate support to the first floor partitions and floor joists. The first floor partitions, whether brick or timber, in turn help support the roof structure.

As with ceilings, being an older property, the old plaster is brittle and prone to deterioration, and over time it cracks away from the brick or lathe background. Therefore, although I did not find any, there are likely to be some loose patches where the key with the background has been lost. In my opinion the wall finishes are in satisfactory condition for their age, and replacement is not necessary unless a perfect finish is required.

There have been some structural alterations carried out, involving removing or changing the load-bearing walls or other structural support. These would normally be supported by steel beams (or very exceptionally timber beams, depending on when they were installed). These alterations would have required Building Regulations approval which should be checked. Without damaging exposure works, it is not possible to confirm the size or suitability of these beams. However, from a visual inspection, the support is functioning satisfactorily.

3.04 Floors

All rooms are furnished and the floors are generally covered with close fitted carpet, timber/laminate, tiles etc. and so the surface of the floors could not be inspected.

Ground and upper floors are generally suspended timber construction, comprising timber joists, covered with floor boarding or chipboard.

The ground floor timber joists are probably built off brick sleeper walls built off a concrete floor slab. There should be a damp barrier between the brick sleeper walls and the floor timbers but because we have not opened up the floor, it is not possible to confirm that this is present.

The upper floor joists span between the external walls and/or partitions with intermediate support where necessary.

Over the years the floors have adopted moderate slopes, which are within acceptable tolerances. When tested there was some vibration to the floors, but this was also within acceptable tolerances.

Parts of the ground floor are of concrete construction, and are sound and level underfoot, with no evidence of any defects.

3.05 Joinery (inc. Kitchen Fittings & Stairs)

This is generally the original timber joinery, with some more recent replacements.

Generally it has suffered normal wear and tear, some not fitting perfectly. Some minor repairs and easing of doors is required, but otherwise they appear satisfactory for their

purpose. Ironmongery and fittings are commensurate with the age of the doors, again not perfect.

When a loft conversion has been carried out, it is usual for fire doors to be required to the first floor. Often this has not been done (or partially by only fitting door closers), as in this case, and you should check that this loft conversion has been approved under Building Regulations.

Some of the doors are fully glazed. Current regulations require glazing below 800mm to be safety glass, and whilst the legislation is not retrospective, if children are to be in residence we recommend that the existing glass be replaced with safety glass.

Kitchen fittings are standard faced chipboard units. There are many defects and overall are of the opinion that they need to be replaced.

Stairs are softwood with timber strings; treads, risers, and all glued and fixed with wedges. Timber balustrade and handrail, all in satisfactory condition, although some slight looseness in the treads.

3.06 Internal Finishes and Decorations

These are generally in a very tired condition, and overall we are of the opinion that total internal redecoration is required.

3.07 Fireplaces

There are fireplaces in some locations but it is not clear whether any could be used, which would require specialist testing and certified as satisfactory from a competent person such as a NACS certified chimney sweep.

It is important that all redundant flues are ventilated to prevent condensation forming and causing damp staining internally. Vents should therefore be incorporated to all blocked up fireplaces and/or flues.

3.08 Sanitary Appliances

We have not commented on the condition of sanitary appliances and bathroom fittings, as you have probably formed your own opinion as to the desirability of replacing these.

3.09 Damp Penetration

The entire property was tested with a 'Protimeter' electrical resistance damp-testing meter. This is primarily the lowest/ground floor at random points wherever accessible, but not generally behind kitchen cupboards or other inaccessible wall surfaces. Also tested were key areas where dampness might be expected to occur, such as where external flashings are present, near external drains, external weep holes, etc.

Damp was found in a number of locations namely……

This may be due to two or three reasons. Firstly the pebbledash render extending to ground level and providing a path for water to rise up past the dpc. Secondly, loose patches of render trapping water which then dries out to the interior of the house. Alternatively rising damp but it requires a more detailed analysis involving drilling a sample from deep within the wall to be conclusive.

Wherever moisture has entered the fabric of a building, conditions are provided for fungal decay to timbers that are adjacent or built into the fabric. It is recommended

that such timbers be exposed to allow further inspection.

3.10 Woodworm, Dry Rot & other Timber Defects

The property is of an age and construction which, given the right conditions, is susceptible to woodworm and/or dry rot.

Woodworm

Infestation by wood boring beetle is a problem which can affect untreated timbers anywhere in the country. The problem is very common, particularly in older properties. The term is used to describe attack by a number of wood boring insects, chiefly the common furniture beetle. Woodboring beetles can live in the wood for a number of years before they come out and you must appreciate that unless all the timbers have been treated, hidden outbreaks may be present.

Although there is currently no evidence of any woodworm attack, in a property of this age it is very likely that there has been some infestation in the past.

It is very often the case that if woodworm is present, it is to the joists and underside of the floorboards with little or no evidence on the surface, and if you lift floorboards at a later date there will probably be some evidence of flight holes. The problem can be remedied provided it is dealt with properly. In most cases proper treatment with an effective wood preservative will eradicate the infestation and provide long-term protection against re-infestation. Any structurally weakened timbers may need to be replaced.

As a precautionary measure, we would recommend that if the carpets are lifted, timbers are examined and if necessary, given a preservative spray. It may be that treatment has already been carried out and guarantees available, and your solicitor should be able to determine whether this is the case.

Dry Rot

Dry rot is a fungus generally confined to buildings, which develops in damp timber usually under conditions of bad ventilation and high humidity. The fungus produces strands, which may extend for several feet over and through such materials as brick and plasterwork. These strands link the original infestation with secondary outbreaks. One of the major difficulties in eradicating dry rot in a building is to ensure that the strands, which may be embedded in inaccessible places, are killed off. To ensure proper and full treatment it is important to establish the full extent of an outbreak, which will involve fully exposing the likely affected areas. The fungus does not like light and often grows between materials where light is excluded. This characteristic makes the fungus difficult to find and even more difficult to eradicate.

No dry was discovered, and nor were there any circumstances where it is likely to develop.

To ascertain conclusively whether any of these defects are present, the full extent and cost of remedial works, it would require an extensive survey including opening up of concealed areas of floor and roof timbers, lintels etc. not possible in a pre-purchase survey.

3.11 Thermal Insulation

In a property of this age where the external walls are sold brick, there is no external wall insulation and the opportunities for improving insulation are very limited.

Loft insulation is approximately 100mm thick, now regarded as inadequate, and recommend that it be increased in accordance with current government guidelines.

3.12 Other Considerations

We have not identified the location of any mobile telephone masts, however they are often disguised, so if you are concerned about living in the vicinity of a mobile telephone mast, you should make separate enquiries.

See under Limitations for information regarding high alumina cement, asbestos and lead paint, all of which can be potentially hazardous.

4.00 SERVICES

As confirmed to you, we have not carried out tests on any of the service installations, and our comments are therefore only based upon visual inspection. In the case of the heating installation, no heat loss calculations have been carried out.

4.01 Electrical Installation

The electrical installation is a conventional PVC twin and earth type cabling, and whilst there is adequate provision of socket outlets, this is not to the same standard as new installations and generally less than desirable for modern day usage, and you may need to have additional sockets installed.

The consumer unit is an old rewirable fuse type, and should be changed, and it is also indicative of an old installation.

Earth bonding is required to all metal fittings, but this can only be tested by an electrician.

Modern pvc sheathed cable should last for about 30 years from new. However it is recommended to be tested every ten years by an NICEIC qualified electrician. There was no indication that any such testing has been carried out, so to advise on the need for re-wiring and to ensure that the installation is safe it is recommend that this be carried out.

4.02 Cold Water Systems

This appears to be a traditional system incorporating water storage at high level feeding all sanitary accommodation, except the kitchen sink which is mains water for drinking. The cold water storage tank is probably located in the roof space, but due to the amount of stored goods, could not be seen or examined. Normally it would be fitted with ball valve, overflow and mains water connection.

Internal distribution pipework generally appears to be copper pipe, although there is increasing use of plastic these days. Most of it is concealed or buried into plaster or cement,and therefore not seen.

In a property of this age, the main supply pipe or some of the concealed pipework may be lead. Lead pipework is not longer permitted for health reasons, but it remains in a large number of old properties. In hard water areas such as this, limescale build-up within the pipes offers some protection against lead contamination.

4.03 Heating & Hot Water Installation

A balanced flue gas boiler located in the kitchen provides heating and hot water. The heating distribution system is by hot water to pressed steel radiators. . The connecting pipework is predominantly copper and appears to be satisfactory, although there is

some surface corrosion around the radiator valves.

Generally the system appeared to be satisfactory, but it was not switched on or operated in any way. We would recommend a service by a qualified gas engineer to ensure that it is working safely and efficiently, and eliminate future problems.

There is a large copper hot water cylinder in a cupboard, fitted with an insulation jacket. Running taps in the bathroom reveals hot water pressure is adequate.

4.04 Gas Installation

Mains gas is supplied by underground pipe which therefore could not be inspected.

Internally gas pipes etc appear to be satisfactory.

All gas appliances, pipework and flues should be the subject of an annual service by a qualified gas engineer. Works to gas appliances etc., by unqualified personnel is illegal. Unless evidence can be provided to confirm that there has been annual servicing we would recommend that you commission such a service prior to use to ensure safe and efficient operation.

4.05 Waste & Plumbing Systems

Internal waste pipes from kitchen sink, hand basins, WC etc all appear to be in uPVC, but much of this is concealed behind units, within ducts etc. Where we have been able to inspect, it is in satisfactory condition.

The upper floor WC's discharge into plastic or cast iron soil & vent pipes, which are generally in satisfactory condition.

5.00 SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

We have summarised the most significant defects, however it is important that you should study the report in its entirety in order to satisfy yourself as to the full implications of the proposed purchase.

I found no significant problems, and the property is considered to be a reasonable purchase. A number of repair items have been noted, but these are generally common to properties of this age. However you should read the report in its entirety to understand the full implications of the proposed purchase.

Other than the key defects noted in the report, there are, as you would expect, a number of other more minor issues. All property requires ongoing maintenance on both a reactive and preventative basis, and this is no exception. The extent of this was not considered unduly onerous given the age and style of the property

There is some evidence of historic foundation movement but we are of the view that it is longstanding and there are no indications of any activity in the recent past.

The property has been extended or altered, and there are no obvious breach of regulations.

6.0 LIMITATIONS

The exterior of the property has been inspected from ground level or other accessible vantage points, using binoculars where appropriate.

Unless otherwise stated the property was occupied and fully furnished, and generally with fitted carpets or other floor finishes throughout, which restricted the survey. It is not within the scope of a pre-purchase survey to move furniture, lift carpets, floorboards, empty cupboards etc.

Our report on the condition of individual elements assumes that normal wear and tear is to be expected.

We have not undertaken an energy efficiency assessment of this property but you should be aware that older properties are not as energy efficient as newer properties constructed with newer materials and insulation.

No tests of the services have been undertaken, and our report on these is based upon a visual inspection only. We generally recommend that it is prudent to commission tests by specialist electrical, gas, and plumbing engineers to report on the condition and performance of these installations.

We understand that the property is to be purchased Freehold with vacant possession, therefore placing all repairing obligations on the purchaser. We have not examined any legal documents. We have pointed out obvious breaches of statutory regulations, but in the case of extensions or alterations, no checks have been made, and you or your legal advisers should ensure that these have been granted the appropriate permissions.

In accordance with our standard practice, we must state that this report is for the use only of the party to whom it is addressed, and no responsibility is accepted to any third party for the whole or any of its contents, and we retain the copyright.

Signed:

Adrian Brooks Associates

Date: