MW Design & Consulting Limited
Consulting Structural Engineers and Building Design Consultants

56 Newtown Road
New Denham
Buckinghamshire
UB9 4BD

T 01895 238990
M 07528 462170
E enquiries@mwdesignconsult.co.uk
W www.mwdesignconsult.co.uk

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Mrs V Howard
188 Holly Lodge Mansions,
Oakeshott Avenue
London
N6 6DU

Dear Mrs Howard,

13 KYLEMORE ROAD, LONDON, NW6 2PS

We were instructed by Mr R Hume, on behalf of executors responsible for the above property to carry out a structural inspection and to report upon the structural condition of the property. Our visual inspection was carried out on 22 July 2014. The weather was bright and sunny.

Description

The house is a 4 bedroom mid-terraced property, we estimate built circa 1890. The property had been previously converted into two flats and then occupied thereafter as a single dwelling, by the previous owner. The stairs run to the right hand side of the property with the main parts of the house and those of the rear annex at split levels.

The house is of traditional construction. The floors are suspended timber construction and generally span front to rear in the main parts of the house and side to side in the rear annex. The rear ground floor level bathroom is of ground bearing concrete construction. The external walls are solid masonry and finished externally with facing bricks.

At the front of the property there is a large bay window and this has a pyramided shape roof over, linked to the main roof.

Access to the loft was through the loft hatch, located over the top floor landing area.

The roof is covered with slates on a traditional cut timber roof and these rafters and ceiling joists span front to rear. The roof over the rear annex is flat with a low height parapet wall at the rear. The timbers for the flat roof most likely span side to side.

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Description (cont.)

The walls above first floor level are generally of load bearing timber studwork construction, finished in lath and plaster.

Windows at the property are generally traditional timber framed sash windows.

The ground level at the front of the property is raised up above the level of the rear garden. There is a basement under the main property with an external low height door access at the rear and internally access is via stairs under the main stairwell.

The foul drains are located at the rear and appear to run to the side of the rear annex and then presumably run to the front, beneath the property most likely to a main sewer in the road.

From the geological survey maps for the area the site is located in an area where the subsoil is likely to be London Clay.

There is a large sycamore tree in the rear garden located approximately 9.0m from the rear of the property.

Left and right referred to in this document, relate to the writer's position when viewing the property looking towards the front door.

Inspection

Loft

The original slates have been replaced, most likely on new battens as a new sarking felt has also been installed.

The rafters are 50x100 timbers at approximately 400mm centres. There is a purlin at mid-height spanning between the party walls and this is strutted off the central spine wall. The rafters are probably slightly over-spanning by current standards, however the roof is covered with slates which are fairly lightweight when compared to concrete tiles. We did not see any significant signs of deflection.

Timbers over the main roof adjacent to the front bay are water stained, however from our visual inspection we did not note any visual signs of rot to exposed timbers.

The loft is insulated with old Rockwool insulation and this is reduced to a thickness of approximately 50mm.

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Second Floor

Rear annex Bedroom

There is significant damp penetration occurring to the rear left hand corner. The wallpaper is pealing from the wall and the plaster below is damaged by damp. The visual signs of significant dampness extends along the left flank wall and across the rear elevation wall, particularly over the rear elevation window. We obtained high elevated damp readings on the ceiling using an electronic damp meter all around the perimeter of the room. The ceiling is sagging.

The timber sash window frame is rotted. The frame partially supports the masonry above, externally there is a masonry arch lintel.

The floor is covered with tiles, which we suspect may contain asbestos.

The internal partition wall is of timber stud construction and lined with lath and plaster. Areas of this plaster are live and adjacent to the door there is an area of damaged plaster.

Rear Annex Kitchenette

There are signs of significant dampness to the ceiling where the ceiling paper is peeling off and the plaster ceiling finishes damaged. This damage extends down the walls.

The lath and plaster finishes to the studwork walls appears live.

The floor is covered with tiles, which we suspect may contain asbestos.

First Floor

Front Bedroom

The ceiling is lined with polystyrene tiles and the floor similarly covered with tiles which we suspect may contain asbestos.

There is a hairline width diagonal crack over the door leading to the landing. This is old in appearance.

There is significant damage caused by water ingress around the front bay window from ceiling to floor level and under the right hand window cill. There are signs of rot to the timber sash windows. There is likely to be a timber bressamer running over the top of the windows forming the bay. The plaster over the windows also has significant signs of dampness.

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We checked the wall with a damp meter, and did not obtain significant readings, so it seems likely that the dampness was related to a previous defect with the roof which was rectified when the roof was recovered.

There is a 2mm wide crack at the left hand side of the bay at low level running around the corner of the main house wall from the cill. This cracking appears more recent.

There is rucked wall paper at the junction of the hallway partition wall to the right hand party wall for the full height of the wall. The partition wall is of timber stud construction.

Middle Bedroom

There are a number of items stored in this room which limited our inspection.

The floor is covered with similar tiles.

There are a number of Hairline width cracks in the plasterboard ceiling.

The frame to the sash window has signs of rot.

There is damp staining to the ceiling.

Hall / Stairwell / Landing

There is significant water damage to the plaster and finishes down the right hand party wall with black mould staining. There is a timber bressamer spanning across the landing supporting the rafters and ceiling joists above. This beam has signs of damage from water penetration and we are concerned that it could be rotted.

The ceiling over the annex and over the stairwell is generally sagging.

There is a vertical crack in the right hand party wall below the bressamer and this is located at the junction of the rear annex structure to the main house. This cracking continues through to the lower first floor landing level below.

The door to the first floor front bedroom slope down slightly to the left hand side and also the door to the rear bedroom at lower first floor level slopes down approximately 15mm to the left hand side.

There are some loose floorboards at the top of the stairs on the lower first floor landing.

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At ground floor level timber partitions remain around the doorway to the front and middle reception rooms and these would have formed the front doors/entrances to the flats.

There is some hairline cracking to moulded plaster ceilings in the entrance hall.

Lower First Floor

Rear Bedroom

There is significant damage caused by dampness to the rear left hand corner, with the dampness most likely continuing down the wall from above. We obtained very high damp readings on the ceiling over this area.

There is a door in the rear elevation wall leading to a steel fire escape stair which provides an escape route to the rear garden.

There is rot in the door frame and water penetration around the threshold.

The floor spans side to side and there is some slight deflection of the floor towards the centre, most likely where the partition walls are constructed off the floor.

The floor is covered with tiles, which we suspect may contain asbestos.

Bathroom

There is significant dampness in the left hand flank wall and ceiling which has caused damage to the finishes, including the plaster. There are signs of rot to the sash window frame.

WC

There are also significant signs of dampness to the left hand flank wall and damage to finishes.

Ground Floor

Front Reception Room

There is a vertical 3mm wide crack at the junction of the hallway wall and front elevation wall running the full height of the wall.

The sash windows and cills to the bay window are in poor condition and rotted.

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There is a vertical 2mm wide crack under the window cill to the right hand side of the bay.

There is also signs of damage caused by dampness at a high level over the left hand side of the bay and the plaster around the bay is generally live.

There is some cracking of the cornice around the bay. There is some movement around the skirting's. There was some signs of damp around the bay window which could indicate rising damp

The floor is also covered with tiles, which we suspect may contain asbestos.

Middle reception room / dining room

Our inspection was limited by the items stored within the room

There are signs of dampness under the rear window.

The floor is covered with similar tiles noted elsewhere.

Lower Ground Floor

Rear Kitchen

There are areas where the walls have been recently re-plastered. It is not known why this has been carried out. There are a number of items stored in the kitchen which limited our inspection. It appears the kitchen may have been under-going some refurbishment.

The ground floor is of suspended timber construction and spans side to side. There are indications of woodworm to the floor boards, although we could not tell if this was live. The floor has a slight fall from the centre towards the front corridor / stairwell.

There are a number of hairline ceiling cracks in the plasterboard finish.

The ceiling paper is peeling away in places which could indicate the floor above is also affected by dampness.

Rear Bathroom

The ground floor is of solid concrete ground bearing construction. There are signs of dampness throughout with rot to the rear window frame.

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WC

The WC is formed in part by a small brick built lean-to structure.

There is a large tapered crack at the junction of the small rear lean-to and the main rear elevation wall of the annex. The crack varies in width from approximately 30mm at the top. The damage indicates the lean-to structure has rotated away from the rear annex.

There is significant damage due to dampness particularly at a high level. There is a timber beam spanning under the rear annex wall where an opening into the lean-to is formed. This timber beam is affected by damp.

There is a vertical crack over the timber beam, approximately 5mm wide.

Basement

The basement is a non-habitable area. The underside of the ground floor joists above can be seen. The ground floor has an over-site covering, possibly chalk.

There is some notable damage to the bricks in the central piers at low level where they have been affected by dampness. Most likely this is caused by rising damp.

There is some woodworm to the underside of the floor boards, particularly under the area of the front entrance porch.

There is a timber wall plate located at the support for the floor joists on the right hand party wall. This timber plate is rotted for most of its length and the lime mortar bed underneath is falling out.

The wall under the front bay is very damp and there is a significant gap under the wall some 30 to 40mm wide.

There is a coal chute to the right hand side of the bay window construction and this is filled with rubble and has a concrete slab cast over.

The floor joists supported in the party wall to the left hand side of the bay window are damp and there appears to be signs of rot at the joists end which could be dry rot.

There is also rot growth on the rear low height external door to the basement.

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EXTERNAL

Rear Elevation

There is dampness in the left hand flank wall of the annex and this can be seen to affect the wall from the top at the eaves, down to approximately first floor level.

There is cracking and movement to some of the arch lintels over the window openings.

Facia boards to the flat roof appear rotted.

The plastic hopper to the waste pipe is leaking

There is a vertical hairline width crack under the middle reception room window.

There is green staining at the junction of the rear annex to the main house wall from the top of the wall. This indicates the wall is damp.

There are two gullies at the rear, one located at the side of the annex and the other at the rear. Both of these gullies are in poor condition. We checked the manhole located at the rear and this appeared to be in satisfactory condition although the drain was filled with mud and could be blocked.

There is a concrete hard-standing along the left side of the rear annex. This sounds hollow and the sub-base may have washed out beneath. We also suspect there may be a buried manhole adjacent to the soil stack pipe near the back door, although this would have to be confirmed.

There is a steel fire escape stair providing an escape route from the first floor rear bedroom to the annex. This stair and balcony is very badly rusted and corroded. This is very dangerous and should not be used.

There is a small tree growing out of the adjacent boundary wall. The bricks on the boundary wall are very loose and also dangerous.

The rear lean-to structure has tapered cracks at the junction with the main rear elevation wall of the annex, where this structure has rotated away.

Areas of masonry to the annex need re-pointing, particularly to the rear elevation.

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There is some slight cracking over the arch lintel of the first floor door opening at the rear of the annex, running up to the stone cill above. There is a crack in the stone cill. This is likely due to some movement of the arch lintel.

There is also cracking and damage to the brickwork where the steel fire escape stair is fixed to the wall.

The garden is very over grown.

Front Elevation

The front path leading to the main front door is covered with tiles and is probably an original feature. However this path has dropped quiet significantly particularly at the front entrance porch where there is a gap of approximately 75mm.

The front garden is overgrown and this limited our inspection of the front elevation, particularly at low level.

There is a 2mm wide crack over the ground floor bay window stonework to the right hand front corner of the bay.

At the left hand side of the bay there is a vertical crack at the junction of the bay window to the main house wall.

The low level plinth to the front of the bay is falling away.

The timber sash windows are in poor condition and the cills are rotted.

There is some dampness and spalling of the facing bricks to the left hand side of the bay adjacent to the rainwater down pipe. It is not known where this downpipe discharges.

There is render installed to the soffit of the eaves and this appears to be falling out in places.

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Discussion / Recommendations

The property has been allowed to fall into disrepair and now requires significant and extensive refurbishment throughout. There are also a number of serious building defects which need to be addressed.

The property can be seen to have been badly affected by dampness for some considerable amount of time. It appears that most of the dampness has penetrated the building fabric from above and most likely through defects in the roof coverings.

Extensive re-plastering of the walls and ceilings is required particularly in the areas affected by dampness.

The main sloping roof over the main part of the house has been recovered with new sarking felt, battens and slates. When we checked the areas below where they have been damaged by damp, we did not obtain such elevated readings as those to the rear annex where the roof has not been repaired.

We did not note any signs of rot to the rafters over the front bay window although the area was not fully accessible. We would hope that the contractor who replaced the roof coverings would have checked these areas as a part of his work. When the plaster etc is removed from around the bay window below, it should be possible to check the condition of the timbers in this area more fully, to confirm they are in a satisfactory condition. Any damaged timber will need to be cut out and replaced.

It is likely that the masonry will take some time to dry out considering how damp the wall must have been.

The flat roof to the rear annex is still leaking and the damage to the plaster finishes is considerable.

We found a number of large timber beams (bressamers) which have been affected by the dampness. These beams need to be fully exposed to confirm the full extent of damage. A decision can then be made as to repair or replacement, as necessary. We suspect they may need replacing.

The main flat roof over the rear annex is sagging and has been leaking for a very long time. We expect that the timber joists forming the roof will be suffering from wet rot, although this could not be confirmed by our visual inspection. We expect that the flat roof weather-proofing will require replacement and there may be significant damage to the timbers requiring replacement. We recommend having a roofer fully inspect the roof and report.

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Where the suspended floor timbers span onto the left flank wall of the annex and this is badly affected by dampness, there is a concern that the ends of the joists in this area could be affected. We would recommend that the floor boards are lifted so that these joists can be fully inspected. Any damaged timbers will need to be replaced.

It should be noted that the full extent of damage to the timbers will not be apparent until the plaster finishes are removed or floorboards lifted to expose the areas affected.

The single glazed timber frame sash windows throughout the property are in poor condition and most likely need replacing.

There is damaged and live plaster throughout the property. This will need to be extensively removed and re-plastered as necessary, following on from the repair of any source of the water ingress and a period of drying out.

There is a vertical crack internally between the main house and rear annex on the right hand party wall within the stairwell. This is most likely due to long term settlement or possibly thermal movement between the two structures. This most likely historical movement and should be repaired.

We would recommend that the plaster is cut away 150mm either side of the crack and the crack then repaired incorporating stainless steel Helifix masonry reinforcement. Any broken bricks should be cut out and replaced. The plaster can then be reinstated incorporating stainless steel lathing.

There is some signs of slight downwards movement to the central areas of the property where internal door linings slope downwards and the kitchen floor also falls. This is most likely due to some historical settlement. The cracking and movement in these areas appeared old and could be repaired as a part of the decoration process.

There is significant dampness affecting the masonry and the timbers within the basement area. This includes spalling brickwork, most likely caused by rising damp.

Considering the amount of dampness noted to the building including possible rising damp, dry rot and the evidence of woodworm, we would recommend having a damp specialist carry out an inspection of the property and report upon these elements. This should include lifting the floorboards in the rear annex kitchen to inspect the sub-floor void below. It may also be necessary to install a chemical DPC if areas are found to be suffering from rising damp. (We have previously used M Mansells (Watford) Ltd for this type of work, Contact Tel No 01923 224004)

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The damaged arch lintels externally will need to be repaired, possibly incorporating Helifix masonry reinforcement. Areas of repointing to the masonry are required.

The cracking to the front bay window would indicate that some slight rotation of the front bay structure has occurred.

We noted that there is a significant gap below the wall of the bay seen within the basement. The gap has the appearance of washing out by water. It is not known how the rainwater down pipe discharges although this may have been modified following the work to the roof. There has been some consolidation of parts of the front garden, as noted where the path has dropped.

We would recommend that the front garden is cleared so that a more thorough inspection can be carried out. A small trial hole excavated internally within the basement to confirm the subsoil conditions would also be recommended. Considering the gap noted under the bay structure wall, we expect that the bay will require some localised underpinning to stabilise it.

The cracking to the bay will need repairing, most likely by tying the bay structure back to the main walls incorporating Helifix masonry reinforcement.

The steel fire escape stair to the rear is in a very dangerous condition. This should not be used. We recommend that the escape stair is taken down and disposed of. The door opening could be bricked up and converted to a window or alternatively the fire escape stair replaced.

The lean-to structure under the stair which forms the WC located off the lower ground floor bathroom is in poor condition and has rotated away from the building. To determine why this has rotated would require some further investigation. It is possible that the damage has been caused by leaking drains or alternatively due to the trees in the back garden affecting the clay subsoil.

We would recommend that the drains are checked by CCTV and hydraulically tested for leaks throughout. This would also allow the drains to be traced more fully including checking for the possibility of a buried manhole adjacent to the back door and to see if the drains could be affecting the front bay structure. It may be necessary to include high pressure jetting to clean the drains as the manhole inspected was filled with detritus. (We have previously used Cascadia Water Ltd for this type of work, contact Tel No 020 8429 6709)

We would also recommend excavating a small trial hole to check the depth of the foundation and the actual subsoil condition of the lean-to. However. The damage to this lean-to is severe and it will need re-building.

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The garden wall adjacent to the lean-to is in poor condition and has a small tree growing on top. The bricks are very loose and this is also dangerous. This section of wall should also be re-built. You may need to confirm the ownership of the wall with the neighbour.

We have not checked any of the electricity or gas installations. We expect that these will not be satisfactory, however we recommend that you instruct your own specialists to check the installations and report.

We have not checked the property for any asbestos containing material and cannot confirm if any asbestos is present. The floor tiles noted throughout the property are of an age and type which may contain asbestos. We would recommend that prior to any work being carried out at the property a "Demolition and Refurbishment" survey is carried out by a specialist. (We have previously used Caswell Group for this type of work, Contact Tel No 01438 743003)

You may wish to confirm the ownership arrangements for the boundary fences/ wall.

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Limitations

This report has been prepared for Mr R Hume, acting on behalf of the executors in relation to the above property. The report has been based upon a visual inspection only of the main structural elements of the house in the areas noted. No heavy items of furniture etc were moved during the inspection.

This report is intended for commenting upon the structural elements of the property and any reference to other maintenance issues is not intended as an exhaustive list of defects.

No responsibility is held out to any other party for the opinions given.

Yours sincerely
For and on behalf of
MW Design & Consulting Limited

[redacted]

M P Waring, I Eng, AMIStructE, MCIAT