4 Eton Villas, London, NW3 4SG

Specific Defect Report

Mrs & Mrs C Holdsworth

31.01.2018

Dear Anna & Chris

RE: 4 Eton Villas, London, NW3 4SG

With reference to your instructions concerning the roof, damp and movement inspection to the above property, I confirm that an inspection has been made today, and I report as follows:-

THE INSPECTION

The surveyor will carry out only a visual inspection. This means that they do not take up carpets, floor coverings or floorboards, move furniture or remove the contents of cupboards. Also, they do not remove secured panels or undo electrical fittings.

The surveyor will not report on the cost of any work to put right defects, unless agreed, or make recommendations on how these repairs should be carried out.

As part of our service we are more than happy to talk through the survey as many times as you wish until you are completely happy.

The survey relates to those parts of the property that were reasonably and safely accessible at the time of the inspection, but you should be aware that further defects can subsequently develop, particularly if you do not follow the recommendations. This is not a Full Survey and I did note many other defects at the property which are not discussed within this report.

SITUATION

The Property is situated in an established residential location in North West London. The property is surrounded by some other residential properties.

WEATHER

During the inspection the weather was wet. The weather in the previous days had been generally wet.

ORIENTATION

For the purposes of this report and unless otherwise stated, the front of the property is considered that which is accessed via the front door. All references to the front, rear, left and right are from that point.

RESTRICTIONS TO INSPECTION

The inspection was non-invasive and I have not seen the condition of walls, floors and ceilings behind any paneling and fixed coverings.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The property is a semi-detached house set over four levels, believed to have been constructed in excess of 100 years ago. There are significant alterations to the property that I expect have been carried out in excess of 30 years ago.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

The walls are solid masonry construction with a pitched roof and parapet walls to most sides.

BUILDING CONDITION

The Inspection

Drainage

There are two inspection chambers to the left side. The chamber by the gate is free from damage and blockages.

The chamber by the side door is full of soil. This indicates that the drains are fractured and soil is entering into the system. This also means that water will leak and erode soil and this can cause movement to foundations,

I strongly recommend that you instruct a CCTV survey and obtain quotes to repair or replace as necessary, prior to purchase.

I would point out that, I am only available to comment on what I see in the chambers and a full CCTV survey will show you exactly the condition of the drains.

The Roof

This is a typical and traditional design being pitched roof and is constructed of soft wood purlins and rafters.

I was not able to see the flat roof or pitched roof structure. There are high damp readings to the all three ceilings under the three roofs to the top floor. You should expect that there are likely to be areas of damage to the roof timbers when you expose these. You should expect to have to replace or repair roof structure timbers as necessary.

The flat roof is leaking and as this type of covering usually has a lifespan of 10-15 years you should plan to have to replace the flat roof covering now.

I did note that there appears to be little or no ventilation to the roof structures. For your information, ventilation is required to limit the risk of timber decay in roof voids and to allow moisture to dissipate. Dry rot is sensitive to high temperatures (over 25 degrees C) and drying and is, therefore, rarely found on exposed timbers or situations where fluctuating conditions are experienced, such as in a well ventilated roof void. Old buildings didn't have felt under the tiles or slates and thus ventilation was present. Modern or re covered roofs have underfelt that prevents this form of ventilation.

The use of insulation above the ceiling reduces the temperature of the roof space and increases the risk of condensation occurring. I consider that it would be advisable, especially if you have a roofer on site making repairs to consider the installation of ventilation.

Externally the pitched covering appears complete with some slipping, broken and loose slates. I suspect that this was recovered around 30 years ago. I am of opinion that this roof covering is due for significant overhaul now. There are many areas of rainwater ingress around parapet walls and the chimney breast flashing etc. I suspect that it would more economical to replace the whole roof covering now while you have scaffold erected for other repairs etc.

There are areas of significant damp damage to the plaster and structure directly below the flat roof terrace to the top floor. I suspect that rainwater is entering via the flat roof/parapet wall. This is likely to need significant overhaul.

You should obtain a quote now to replace the two flat roofs and the main pitched roof coverings and any necessary timbers. This will be costly and you should be prepared for this.

Parapet Walls

Parapet walls are those that rise up above roof level and are therefore exposed on both sides. Parapet firewalls are between properties and are built up above roof level to prevent the spread of flame from building to building in case of fire. They are highly exposed and vulnerable to water penetration.

When this property was constructed in accordance with building practice at that time, damp-proof courses were not installed within the parapet walls or in chimney stacks. Modern regulations require damp proof courses in these locations. If parapet walls or chimney stacks become saturated over a period of heavy or persistent rain, then dampness may descend by gravity into the structure below and can cause deterioration of decoration and plaster to perish.

The parapet walls are in a neglected condition and all require overhaul. There are areas of missing and cracked render to the parapets and this is permitting additional rainwater to enter the property and cause significant damp damage.

You should obtain a quote to overhaul ALL parapet walls now to be carried out in conjunction with roof works.

Chimney

When this property was constructed in accordance with building practice at that time, damp-proof courses were not installed within the chimney stacks. Modern regulations require damp proof courses in these locations. If chimney stacks become saturated over a period of heavy or persistent rain, then dampness may descend by gravity into the roof void and can cause deterioration of decoration and plaster to perish. The flaunching's (sand cement around the up stand of the flue liner/chimney pots) could not be seen properly from ground level. These areas are vulnerable to cracking and water penetration that can remain unnoticed.

The chimney appears to be maintained externally, but internally there are leaks and dampness is affecting the walls, chimney breast and ceilings adjoining.

You should obtain a quote to overhaul the chimney and flashings etc.

I note that the chimney has been removed to the rear upper two floors. You should check that this has building regulations approval and sign off. If not then you should make an invasive investigation with your structural engineer to check the level of support provided. This is a safety concern and should not be overlooked.

Movement

The property was carefully checked internally and externally for any evidence of movement. No examination has been made to the foundations of the building because to do so requires extensive excavation. We have drawn such conclusions, as we are able from the surface evidence visible at the time of our inspection. We did not find evidence to suggest that the building has suffered structural movement due to foundation failure or similar defect.

The render finish is generally satisfactory although there are some cracks present. These should be repaired in order to prevent water penetration via capillary action. Fine cracks can be raked out and filled with proprietary filler. Larger cracks should be cut out with a disc cutter to a width of at least 40mm with edges undercut so that new render has a mechanical key. If cracks penetrate the wall then professional advice should be obtained prior to making good.

When render becomes detached it tends to trap water in behind. A hammer test should be carried out and hollow sounding detached areas marked up. These should be hacked carefully removed preferably back to any existing ashlar lines in the render finish to reduce the visual impact. A disc cutter should be used and edges undercut to give a mechanical key. A careful inspection should be made of the wall and any defects repaired prior to rendering

Even though the remainder of the property in general shows no specific evidence of ongoing movement, and that any other settlement movement which has taken place, appears to be historic and non-progressive, there is never any certainty that it will not move in the future, as it is always upon climate and rain fall etc.

Damp

The premises were generally tested with a moisture meter for evidence of rising dampness, penetrating dampness and condensation. Evidence of such dampness was found in the following situations.

1 I have taken, high damp readings to the ceilings to the under side of the sloping roof, the flat roof and terrace to the top floor. I suspect that this is rainwater entering the property through the defective flat and pitched roof coverings. I have already recommended that you plan to recover the roof and replace as necessary any timbers etc.

2 There are visible signs damp ingress and damage to the walls and ceiling under the party parapet wall to the top floor. This is likely to be connected to the previously discussed leaking parapet wall. You should plan to overhaul all parapet walls and replace any weather seals and flashings etc.

3 Very high damp readings to the back wall to the top floor. I suspect that rainwater is entering again through defective parapets walls and gutters etc. These all need overhaul now.

4 Very high damp readings to the back wall to the first floor. The full width of the rear elevation is wet to the first floor. There is likely to be a combination of rainwater entering via defective render, failing roof coverings and leaking gutters and parapet walls. This all needs overhaul now.

5 High damp readings to the side elevation over the main stairs to the first floor. The flat roof terrace is over this side wall. I suspect that rainwater ingress is linked to this balcony. Additionally there may be some rainwater entering via the render.

6 I have taken, high damp readings to the side and front elevations to the fist floor. I note many areas of cracking to the render but in addition I think that the cement render is absorbing the moisture and this is showing internally. Other areas to the property, are likely to be affected by dampness within the render, but are not mentioned within this report. This will be difficult to prevent without full removal of the render and replacement with a modern water proofing render.

7 Visible damp damage to plaster to WC to raised ground floor. This is likely to be connected to point 4.

8 I find significant evidence of rising dampness to the walls around the main front entrance and to all of the walls and the concrete floor slab to the lower ground floor.

In general when rising dampness occurs, soluble hygroscopic (moisture retaining) salts, which occur naturally in the soil are carried up into the walls by the rising moisture. As the moisture evaporates, the salts are deposited in the plasterwork and over the wall surface and over a period of time form considerable concentrations. Hygroscopic materials readily absorb moisture from the air, thus, even after rising damp has been stopped, the walls are likely to remain damp, particularly during periods of high humidity. To overcome the problem caused by hygroscopic salts, most damp-proofing specialists (in order to issue a guarantee) recommend that the wall plaster is removed and reinstated with a material that does not readily allow the salts within the wall to migrate into the new plasterwork.

Some rising dampness in all properties is often tolerated by the owner/occupier provided that the level of the water in the soil below is such that this can be kept within reasonable bounds.

On the point of view of the structure itself, however, rising dampness has another drawback. This is that when damp brickwork is adjacent to timber, there is a possibility of a fungal attack in the same. Where timber exists and is to be retained, the risk of fungal attack to timbers that bear into or are in direct contact with damp walls will not be significantly reduced by the insertion of a damp-proof course.

Prior to purchase, I very strongly recommend that in addition to the previously mentioned repairs, that you ask a British Wood Preserving and Damp-proofing Association (B.W.P.D.A.) member specialist timber treatment and damp-proofing contractors to investigate and to advise upon the above and provide an estimate for necessary works. Their recommendations should be implemented (an insured guarantee should be obtained).

To put this into perspective, I regularly find these issues in a property of this age and type and design, but in this case, these issues are significant and should be resolved.

Dampness caused by penetration through external walls and roof can be dealt with, but there will be significant costs involved and these should be taken into account.

Beetle Attack/Timber Defects

A number of types of beetle lay eggs on wood that hatch into grubs which then bore into and feed on the wood. This is commonly known as woodworm. Structural weakening can occur by some beetles. The woodworm can stay in the wood for several years before emerging as adult beetles and leaving characteristic woodworm exit holes. They also then leave "frass" a dust formed of excreted wood. Woodworm can therefore be in the wood and show no discernable evidence. *Dampness will encourage infestation* but woodworm can occur in wood that is dry.

During my inspection I found no evidence of beetle infestation, however we cannot discount its presence within other parts of the property.

You should ask a British Wood Preserving and Damp-proofing Association (B.W.P.D.A.) member specialist timber treatment company, to be engaged to provide quotes for Wood Worm treatment as necessary or for the replacement of affected joists and floor coverings to all levels. Ask them to check the roof frame also. An insured guarantee should be obtained. Be aware fairly extensive areas of timber could not be inspected due to the presence of floor coverings, ceilings and access restrictions.

Brown rots and dry rot (serpula lacrymans)

A particularly virulent form of fungal decay is dry rot (serpula lacrymans) and it is a particular form of brown rot. It is able to draw water through mycelium strands and to dampen wood that would otherwise have been too dry to support fungal decay. These strands are able to pass through lime mortars behind plaster and through walls. It is therefore the most rapidly spreading and most difficult to eradicate.

The best way to eradicate dry rot and other forms of brown rot is to eradicate the source of moisture. During the drying process, it will tend to develop a fruiting body, capable of throwing out further spores and it is therefore, important to monitor the outbreak during the drying period over a period of time. If possible, it should be ensured that good cross-ventilation is provided to discourage future outbreaks. If the area is to be closed in before the outbreak has been fully eradicated, it would be advisable to carry out localized treatment with a fungicide as a precautionary measure.

It used to be considered necessary to remove large areas of plaster to approximately 1m beyond the dry rot outbreak and to remove any sections of timber within a similar area. Treatment also typically would involve wall irrigation techniques that is pumping the wall full of liquid fungicide, rather than allowing it to dry out. These types of repairs are still generally recommended by many specialist timber and damp-proofing firms, usually to obtain a guarantee to enable a property sale to complete. Other forms of brown rot include cellar rot, which can be mistaken for dry rot but has black mycelium strands, rather than white strands as in the case of dry rot.

White rots

White rot survives in wetter conditions than brown rot and is often called wet rot. Treatment involves cutting out of decayed sections of timber, back to sound timber ensuring that any cause of dampness is rectified and repairing with filler or by splicing in new sections of

timber. New sections should be isolated from dampness in the structure to ensure that a further outbreak does not occur.

I have included the above text for you regarding timber decay and rot to explain the seriousness of the situation if you have rot within the timber of the property. I have concerns for dry and wet rot to the long term leaks to the roof timbers and to the timber and masonry structure, affected by long term rising damp and dampness in the upper level floor joists. As I cannot see the structure, I cannot comment in any more detail. As per the damp section, you must investigate further prior to purchase, checking timber on all levels.

Confidentiality

This report shall be for the private and confidential use of yourself, for whom the report is undertaken, and it should not be reproduced in whole, or in part, nor relied upon by third parties for any use without the express written authority. Without such authority, we can accept no responsibility to any third party.

I hope this provides the information you require and if you wish to discuss any of the items or require any further information, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours truly,

Director

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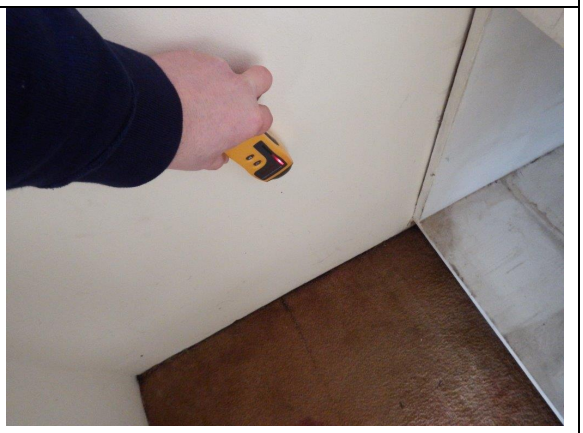
Appendix A

	
Drain Full Of Soil	Cracks to Render
	
Parapet Walls Need Overhaul	Lateral Damp Penetration
	
Lateral Damp Penetration	Same

	
Very High Levels Rising damp to Lower Ground Floor	Same