DAVID HANCHET MRICS
Chartered Surveyor

1 Woodbine Cottages
Wessex Way
Maidenhead
SL6 3BR

Tele 01628 631444
Mobile 07990 525992

BUILDING CONDITION REPORT

ON

23 GLOUCESTER CRESCENT

LONDON

NW1 7DS

For: W Lander Esq
Basement Flat
5 Handel Street
London WC1N 1PB

Date of inspection: 26th August 2019

Scope of survey

At the time of inspection the property was vacant and had been unoccupied for some time. Stone flags were laid in the entrance lobby, with old PVC or lino tiles in the Hall, old linoleum on the adjoining landing and staircases, old PVC tiles in the shower room on the top floor and bathroom on the first floor, and fitted close carpet to most of the remaining staircase and landings, preventing inspection of covered floorboards and subfloor timbers beneath. Remaining floors were mostly in bare varnished floorboards, with tiled concrete floors throughout most of the basement.

Most plumbing, pipework, conduit and cables were buried beneath plaster or under floors and these sections were not inspected. The water supply had been turned off and was not tested. The cental heating system appeared to have been drained down and was not inspected or tested.

No details were available of any major alterations, repairs or additions or of any timber treatment or damp proof course work and details should be obtained, particularly regarding damp proofing and replacement of the solid floor in the basement.

The foundations supporting the main walls were not exposed, these are probably in stepped brickwork. The British Geological Survey map shows the house is built on London Clay Formation, comprising clay and silt. No excavations were carried out.

An inspection has not been carried out of those parts of the house which were covered, unexposed or inaccessible and I cannot report that these areas are free of rot, beetle, dampness, structural or other defect.

This report has been prepared in confidence, for the person to whom it is addressed, together with his advisers and no part of this report may be used by any other third party, without my prior consent in writing.

In view of the age of the property, it is possible that some asbestos products have been used in its construction or is in materials eg floor coverings. Where asbestos is suspected, this will be advised, but a full asbestos survey has not been carried out. The inspection was carried out during a long dry spell.

Description

The building comprises a four storey end of terrace house built around 180 years ago on a gently sloping site, with land sloping downwards from the front to the rear.
The house is built in solid brickwork, fully rendered externally, with single storey suspended Bay on the front elevation, the main entrance is on the right-hand side.
The floors at basement level have been renewed in solid concrete, with suspended timber floors above, under two original double pitched slate roofs with slate mansard on the left hand side.
A small flat roof terrace has been built into the rear of the pitched roofs at a later date. There is the remains of an old zinc flat roof above the front entrance.

The accommodation briefly comprises:

SECOND FLOOR: Two bedrooms, shower room with shower cubicle and basin, separate WC, landing with cupboard and access onto flat roof.

FIRST FLOOR: One room, bathroom with bath, basin and WC, airing cupboard

GROUND FLOOR: Entrance lobby and hall, cupboard, two interconnecting rooms.

BASEMENT: One room, kitchen with fitted wall and floor units; WC., under entrance steps area with Ideal Mexico gas fired boiler and hot water cylinder.

The house is on mains gas, water, electricity and drainage and has gas fired radiator central heating.

Main roof

This comprises two double pitched roofs of timber construction, drained by a central gutter, with a section cut out of the rear of the internal roof pitches to create a flat roof terrace.
The roofs are clad in welsh or similar slate. The roof spaces could not be inspected due to lack of access and the roof timbers and any underfelt and insulation were not inspected, however, the roof slopes were straight with no sag or roof spread.

Externally, slate roof coverings were generally sound and it appears the roofs have been reslated at some stage. A few slates have slipped on the inner facing roof slopes due probably to rusting of fixing nails or people walking on the slates to patch the box gutter covering and these slates have been clipped back with zinc clips which will need maintaining. One slate has slipped slightly since and needs clipping back. The old ridge tiles are all bedded on sand and cement, in sound condition.

Flashings against the party wall and along the top of the roofs are in replacement lead in sound condition and have had some repair carried out on the right hand party chimney stack.
The back gutter to the right hand chimney stack is in old zinc which is weathered and should be renewed in due course. The old rubber sleeves around the two soil vent pipes have weathered but appear serviceable.

The left-hand side of the left-hand main roof, drains onto a near vertical slate mansard roof into a hidden box gutter which drains to the front. The slate appeared sound where visible from ground level but could not be fully inspected. Plants were however growing out of the structure behind the wall above and probably in the box gutter, masonry is crumbling away due to dampness problems and the gutter and surrounding area need immediate inspection to determine repairs necessary. There is evidence of long term water leakage through the box gutter internally, on the ceilings and walls at the front of the building. This is a potential dry rot area which should be investigated.

The main slate roofs otherwise all appeared reasonably sound with no obvious settlement or movement in the structures and no sign of movement in the rafters. The exposed Rafter feet to the main roofs and sarking boards above all appeared in sound condition.

The flat roof terrace area at the rear is of timber construction, originally covered in zinc sheet laid on old softwood boards over the joists. The zinc has perished over time and has now been over coated with layers of bitumen and roofing felt, as a poor temporary measure to try and provide a waterproof covering, as serious long-term water leakage has occurred through this roof over a number of years and the complete roof covering needs replacing now. You advised that the roof was still leaking during a previous visit. Only a very limited inspection of the flat roof timbers was possible from the shower room beneath where some of the plasterboard had been removed, as the roof void was insulated with fibreglass quilt. The visible timbers

immediately above were sound. The roof drains forwards, beneath the front u-PVC wall onto the old box gutter draining the slate roofs. The gutter covering appears to be in old zinc in poor condition, and has been patched and repaired and needs replacing now.

The walls on the inner face of the flat roof terrace are in u-PVC, nailed to the timber uprights. These also clad the old water tank housing which is fitted with an old heavy zinc cover. The cover and flashing detail are in poor condition and need replacing. If the water tank is to be removed, the u PVC panelling along the party wall can all be removed back to original brickwork.

Roof to front entrance

A proper inspection of the flat roof was not possible due to lack of access, however a section of the roof was viewed from a barred window.

The roof is probably of timber construction, originally covered with sheet zinc laid in bays on timber boards, stepping down at intervals and draining to the rear. The roof covering has been flattened at the rear, probably by removal of the old zinc and lifting the rear of the roof deck. The whole area was then over coated with aqua seal or similar waterproofing compound. Old zinc flashings are still in place around the edges of the roof which have been over coated with aqua seal or similar. Some of the pointing to the old flashings is cracked allowing water ingress. The outlet in the roof was small and liable to block, and access is difficult due to the barred window. The roof was not walked on and roof timbers were not inspected, however, heavy damp staining on the ceiling beneath in the entrance lobby area indicates where leaks have occurred. There is always a potential for dry rot in this area as the roof void is now completely sealed with no ventilation at all. It is very unlikely that the roof is insulated.

Bay roof

An old pitched roof which appears to be clad in lead with repaired or replacement capping. The covering appeared in sound condition. Roof timbers were not inspected, however, there was no evidence of movement.

Chimney stacks

The three chimney stacks all appeared to be in original brickwork, covered in old sand and cement render. The front right hand stack supports three original clay chimney pots which are open. Brickwork is rendered and had been painted over, most of this has weathered away. The concrete flaunching along the rear of the stack has weathered away and needs repair.

One chimney pot has been replaced on the right-hand party stack and all four pots were open. The stack was in reasonable condition with an old small fracture running through the render which needs repointing.

On the left-hand party stack, one chimney pot has been removed and an air vent has been installed on the side which is good practice. The remaining three original pots are open. Concrete flaunchings have been made good but are defective on the left hand side and need repair.

Some old cracking was visible on the rendering on the stacks which need pointing up to prevent water ingress.

None of the flues were inspected or tested.

Gutters and rainwater pipes

The gutters draining the main roofs have been renewed some years ago in PVC. The mansard roof and main roof are drained by a replacement PVC Hopper head and rainwater pipe discharging over an old gully at ground level.

The gutter draining the roof terrace and central slate roofs drains into what appears to be an old lead pipe at upper level, which connects and drains into a replacement PVC rainwater downpipe, which also drains the PVC gutter to the Bay roof into a gully. This pipe also drains a waste pipe which should be reconnected to discharge into a replacement soil pipe as and when installed. The main right hand roof slope is drained by a replacement PVC gutter discharging into an old, probably original, cast-iron pipe which showed some rust corrosion and may need replacing. The water pipes discharge into an old cast-iron Hopper head and

rainwater downpipe at the rear. Loose pipe joints need remaking. Gutter and pipe joints were not tested for watertightness.

The surface water drainage is probably connected to a combined sewer which was not inspected or tested. The old drains will be vulnerable to damage by the roots of the two large trees in the front garden.

Main walls

The main walls of the house are of 350 mm solid brick construction at lower level, reducing to 225 mm solid brickwork at first floor level and above. The brickwork is completely rendered over in original sand and cement stucco render and painted, with projecting horizontal cornices and rendered mouldings around window openings.

In a house of this age, it is very unlikely that any horizontal or vertical damp proof courses and membranes were installed in the walls or floors.

At upper level, The wide coping stones between the chimney stacks on the party wall are not wide enough and need replacing, to prevent water soaking into the brickwork beneath. Projecting cement fillets have been laid on the side of number 23 with lead flashing beneath to help prevent damp penetration, however, removal of the u-PVC cladding should overcome the problem.

The old stone copings on the sloping section of the party wall to the right of the right-hand party stack have weathered away and ideally need replacing.

The stone copings on the party wall to the left of the left hand chimney stack have been replaced with lightweight concrete copings which have only minimal overhang and do not appear to have a drip on the underside, but appear well supported by galvanised steel bars with upturned ends.

On the main left-hand flank elevation, the rendered wall at upper level is badly weathered at the rear due to long term saturation, probably from a blocked and overflowing gutter with water soaking through the masonry and subsequent frost damage. Paint and render are also

lifting on the projecting horizontal cornice beneath.

At ground floor level, a section of render has been made good beneath the painted over window and an old wide doorway opening at basement level has been blocked up and rendered over. The minor cracking on the rendered surfaces is due to shrinkage and not serious.

On the front elevation, render is in fair condition and has been patched and repaired over the years. The original, decorative horizontal cornice above the ground floor windows has been cut back and repaired with a vertical finish. Minor cracking visible in the wall above the bay probably occurred as a result of some slight settlement in the timber bressemers supporting the wall above, which is to be expected and not considered serious providing there is no decay in the timbers, as leaks have occurred in the past, visible internally.

The base of the main wall projects out about 300 mm and is probably in original brickwork, most of which has been rendered over and is in reasonable condition. Some minor old cracking from settlement has occurred in the right hand section of front wall to the left of the ground floor window, but there was no recent of serious movement.

Additional daylight has been provided to the basement windows by creation of light wells in the front garden with concrete floors and brick walls. The front wall to the left hand light well has bowed quite heavily and most of the internal rendered surfaces are missing. The walls on the right-hand side are covered in old patched render. The brick on edge coping has dropped on the left-hand side and needs repair. The old cracked concrete floors should be taken up in both areas and re-formed to drain down to the gullies.

On the main right hand elevation, render has been patched and repaired in places, with some surface cracking which will need ongoing maintenance.

The horizontal cornice above the front entrance has cracked away and sections were broken and this area needs repair. The front entrance is slightly distorted due to old settlement in the main side wall which is not unusual or serious and to be expected.

The flank wall of the front entrance is in 225 mm solid brickwork. Render on the external walls has been patched and repaired in places, the area has suffered from long-term water leakage at

the top, around the pipe and gutter outlet, this is an area where dry rot can occur and thrive, particularly as the roof is now totally enclosed with no ventilation and this area needs opening up for reinspection. Some past, uneven settlement has occurred in the wall with old fractures running up above the side door and window, but there was no evidence of serious movement.

The internal faces of the parapet walls above the flat roof and top of the walls are covered in old uneven render which has been overcoated with bitumen, to try and prevent damp penetration. Better protection could be provided by installing concrete copings on a damp proof course (dpc) along the top of the walls.

Rear boundary wall

The original dividing party boundary wall between number 23 and 21 at the rear has been roughly raised in brickwork and capped over. The projecting section of brickwork at ground floor level is unprotected, covered with weeds and is allowing water to soak through into the main wall of the house and a proper coping detail is recommended, to fully weatherproof the area.

External decorations

The external decorations to the main walls are poor.

Front entrance steps

These are in old stone which appears to have been rendered over at some stage. The lower steps have dropped and need lifting and replacing or repair.

Side steps to basement

These are in old York stone and have settled, quite badly at the top and have been patched and repaired and will need ongoing maintenance. The old stone step to the side basement door has been raised in sand and cement which has allowed water to become trapped and caused rot in the timber threshold to the door.

Windows doors and external joinery

The barge boards on the Gable ends are in old timber, suffering from decay due to lack of maintenance. The fascia boards supporting the guttering are in timber and were probably replaced when the gutters were renewed. These generally appeared in reasonable condition from ground level, some weathering was evident on the ends of the fascias, due to lack of paint.

Windows are mostly original timber framed double hung sashes with timber sills. Old metal and timber frame windows have been overpainted on the left-hand return wall.

On the Bay, the stone sub cill has been raised in sand and cement to above the bottom level of the window frame and sill which has allowed water to become trapped and is the cause of decay in the timber.

The windows are all very old, mainly in timber and all single glazed. Most of the old timber framed double sash windows are in extremely poor condition and badly rotted due to complete lack of maintenance. Decorations to the windows and most doors are in extremely poor condition, with many of the putties lifting or missing and the windows will require extensive overhaul and several require replacement. Metal security bars were fixed to the windows at the front at lower level and to the windows on the right-hand return wall which are rusted and in need of attention. No attempt was made to open any of the windows.

A brass plate has been installed on the old timber threshold to the main front door, some of the exposed timber threshold has decayed from wet rot.

A heavy fire door and frame have been installed at basement level on the right-hand side. The door is in sound condition but the door frame has rotted at lower level.

An alumimium opening rooflight has been installed to the flat roof,which was in working order, with aluminium roof light in the pvc wall of the roof terrace.

External decorations to joinery are extremely poor to non existent.

INTERIOR

Ceilings and walls

Most of the ceilings at basement, ground and first floor level are in original lath and plaster with decorative plaster cornices in the living rooms. Some of the ceilings have been renewed in plasterboard at second floor level. Many of the old ceilings have suffered varying degrees of water ingress, some extremely heavy, due to defective roof coverings and leaking or blocked and overflowing gutters. Where old lath and plaster becomes saturated, the plaster rehydrates, becomes very heavy and expands, causing the plaster to lose key with the laths and fail, which has occurred in one living room here a large section of ceiling plaster has collapsed.

Internal partition walls at ground floor level and above are all of lightweight timber stud construction, covered with lath and plaster, with a variety of finishes. Quite heavy past settlement has occurred in the walls and floors at first and second floor level, which is not unusual in a building of this age and construction.

A load bearing solid wall divides the kitchen from the living room in the basement and a second wall has been removed and a beam installed.

Some general rising dampness was evident in the walls at basement level, which was severe to very severe in places, due to lack of a horizontal or vertical damp proof course in the brick walls and extensive work is necessary.

Floors, skirtings and staircases

The floors at basement level are in solid concrete, most are covered with square stone tiles and generally appeared in sound condition, although damp meter readings showed high levels of dampness and a considerable amount of white efflorescence on the cement mortar grouting in the joints. It is not known whether there is any adequate damp proof membrane beneath the solid floor. Some of the efflorescence and dampness may be due to condensation and long-term water leakage through and into the building and from leaking pipework in the kitchen.

It is unlikely that the solid floor is insulated.

The floors at upper level are of suspended timber construction with mostly old floorboards laid over the ceiling joists which run across the building from left to right. The floorboards run from front to rear. Some visible past settlement has occurred in the floors which also support the old stud walls, which is not unusual in buildings of this age.

The main staircase is of original timber construction with winder treads against the outside wall, all in fair condition. The staircase is of lightweight construction and and the design has caused the staircase to settle where it is unsupported. The staircase to the basement is old, probably original, with narrow spindles and appeared in reasonable condition. The side timber string is fixed to the rear wall which showed some damp levels in the plaster but there was no sign of surface decay in the timber.

SECOND FLOOR

Left hand bedroom

The floor and sides of the roof terrace above project into the room and are in plasterboard. Damp staining on the ceilings and walls is from leakage through the old flat roof deck. These were meter tested and dry.

Water staining on the curved plastered section of return wall on the chimney stack was meter tested and wet, this is probably from water running down the open chimney flue and through the brickwork. The flue to the original fireplace was open. Wide old floorboards were varnished and patched in places with hardboard.

Pump cupboard

Old damp staining on the ceiling was meter tested and dry.

Landing

The ceiling beneath the terrace has been replaced in plasterboard and skimmed but was heavily water stained from ongoing leaks. The plaster was meter tested and dry at the time.

The sloping section of ceiling above the stairwell appears to have been renewed in plasterboard and was sound. A small area of damp was evident at the top of the ceiling at the rear.
Heavy old woodworm was evident in the surface of floorboards and several of the boards have been cut, probably for installation of services. Details of any timber treatment for woodworm in the form of report, estimate and guarantee should be obtained.

Cupboard

The settlement in the floor has caused the door to stick.

Shower room

This contained a shower cubicle and basin. Walls were fully tiled with old vinyl or similar tiling on the floor. The ceiling was heavily water stained from leaks through the flat roof.
Part of the plasterboard ceiling had been removed to provide limited inspection of a supporting beam and boarding to the roof deck above which were sound where visible.

WC

There is an old louvered window at the top. A further vent is installed on the external wall above the WC. The screwed down panel above the system was not opened. The original ceiling appears to have been renewed in plasterboard with rough plaster finish.

Right hand bedroom

This appears to have been enlarged by removal of most of an original wall and the floor is on two separate levels. The ceiling has been renewed in plasterboard with old damp stains at high level and on the bottom of the side wall to the roof terrace. These were damp tested and dry.
The chimney fireplace has been removed, the flue blocked up and vented which is good practice. Wall plaster is in poor condition in the cupboard to the right of the chimney breast which houses the header tank for the central heating. Some of the old floorboards in the bedroom have been cut for installation of services and a section patched in ply.

FIRST FLOOR

Bedroom

Cupboards with some shelving are installed to the left of the chimney breast, the fireplace was open, with old cracked stone hearth and fire bricks. A large section of old lath and plaster ceiling has fallen away from past water leakage and this will need cutting back further to sound plaster and repaired.

In the front corner of the room the ceiling plaster and cornice is heavily stained, from water leakage through the box gutter draining the mansard roof. This is a likely area for dry rot to break out and an area of plaster should be carefully removed to allow inspection of timbers built into the structure.

External walls have been replastered and were generally sound. Quite heavy past settlement has occurred in the landing partition wall which is the cause of distortion in the doorframe.

Bathroom

An old style panelled bath is installed in the centre of the room with old WC pan set in a timber frame adjoining, with marble slabbed top on the basin on the front wall. The original fireplace has been removed and the flue blocked up and vented. The door above the WC provides access to the cistern. The lower part of the walls are panelled out in timber, to dado level and were generally sound. Some minor shrinkage cracking was evident in the cornice above the window, but there was no serious movement. The window frame is in exceptionally poor condition externally. The floor was not inspected. An airing cupboard is built in, with timber slat shelving against the partition wall and storage cupboards built-in above, with some storage. Ceiling plaster was in poor condition, from past water leakage.

Landing

Plaster on the curved underside of the staircase is in old lath and plaster, which has cracked and been patched. General water staining was evident on the rear wall above the staircase, from past water leaks probably through the roof before repairs were carried out to the flashings.

The ceiling and cornice above the bathroom door are heavily stained, from past water leakage. Where carpet was pulled back, several floorboards had been cut and roughly reinstated. The window frame is an extremely poor condition externally.

GROUND FLOOR

Entrance lobby

A cupboard is built in at lower level, with timber shelving above. The old stone floor slabs had moved and the front ones are cracked and need replacing. The window is in reasonable condition externally. Walls were meter tested and dry. Wall plaster at upper level is cracked and has been patched and repaired with old damp stains on the right hand rear corner of the hall. The concrete pier is also surface damaged.

Hallway

The rear ceiling on the right-hand side has been renewed in plasterboard or over boarded at some stage with heavy old damp staining which was dry on testing. The old timber framing to the curved arch is in poor condition on the rear wall.

Cupboard

This was part shelved with old linoleum on part of the floor. The old ceiling has been renewed in plasterboard, many years ago with hole in the plaster. The visible joist above was painted green, suggesting it has been treated with a timber preservative. Where linoleum was lifted, floorboards were in reasonable condition, with some cut boards at the rear. It is probable that the old linoleum contains asbestos fibres and care must be taken in handling the material.

Landing and hallway

The old floor tiles may contain asbestos fibres and great care must be taken in handling. Past settlement in the supporting floor is the cause of slight distortion in the doorway to the living room. Minor old cracking in the old lath and plaster ceiling is not serious.

Left hand living room

The old lath and plaster ceiling has settled with general cracking through the plaster.
The ceiling is still however well bonded to the joists and cracks can be made good.
The cornice in the front corner beneath the mansard has suffered considerable water ingress over the years and this is a potential dry rot area which needs opening up. Some of the decorative cornice has fallen away and much of the wall plaster on the front wall is defective with loose sections at the top and dampness in the plaster. This area needs exposing and will need to be completely dried out before plastering.

The old ceiling in the Bay is in original plaster, which has suffered badly at both ends from water leakage in the past and this area needs taken down and the timber beams supporting the main wall above the opening exposing for signs of decay and dry rot.

An opening has been formed at some time into the right-hand room, and plaster has been roughly make good above.

The fireplace was open, with old damaged fire bricks and cracked stone hearth. Floorboards are original, in fair condition although several boards are badly damaged and need replacing.

Right hand living room

The shelf unit is built in, to the left of the chimney breast with full height bookcase on part of the rear wall and on the front wall. The fireplace is original and open, with old firebrick and cracked stone hearth. Water damage was evident through the ceiling in front of the chimney breast and in the left-hand rear corner above the shelf. Floorboards are mostly original and generally sound, although a few boards need repair and replacement.

BASEMENT

Left hand living room

Cupboards, with shelving above are installed full height either side of the chimney breast.
The fireplace was open with old fire bricks. The ceiling is in original lath and plaster, heavily

cracked in places but still secured to the floor joists above.

The original door opening to the outside yard area has been blocked up and plastered over. The front and side walls are acting as retaining walls to the external ground levels and due to penetrating dampness have been dry lined and plastered to mask dampness. The rear walls generally appeared to have been replastered in sand and cement above the cupboards. Rising dampness was evident on the wall to the chimney breast and wall plaster was defective and damp on the party wall in the cupboards.

Curved archways have been formed in the supporting solid wall to the kitchen and hallway. Some penetrating dampness was evident in the front corner. This wall is load bearing as it supports the enclosed beam at ceiling level between the hall and kitchen. Removal of the arched openings is possible but a steel lintol or frame will need to be installed.

Some of the skirting had rotted away due to horizontal damp penetration along the front and side walls.

The tiled floor generally appeared in sound condition although there was a considerable amount of white efflorescence on the surface of the grouting either from lack of a damp proof membrane beneath, or past flooding of the area. A section of the floor should be opened up to determine the exact construction beneath and the type and condition of any damp proof membrane and any repairs or further work necessary.

Kitchen

This appears to have been created by removal of most of the rear dividing partition wall and installation of an encased beam. Old wall and floor units are installed. The floor tiling is continuous with the living room floor and sound with efflorescence and dampness visible on the sand and cement grouting between the tiles as before.

General rising and/or penetrating dampness was evident on the external walls. A leak from the plumbing under the sink has occurred over a long period of time and the old kitchen unit is still damp.

Hall

The wall to the kitchen is in lightweight timber stud work at lower level, with full height glazing above. The wall plaster on the main wall, to the left of the cupboard was saturated from rising dampness.

Stair cupboard

The rear wall was dry lined out against dampness. Old linoleum is laid over a concrete floor, which appeared sound.

Rear lobby

Ceiling plaster is old and very rough and has been patched and repaired. Wall plaster is original, suffering badly from rising and penetrating dampness, with sections missing.
The floor is tiled onconcrete as before with some efflorescence on the grouting.

Boiler cupboard

Walls are in original brickwork, part painted and part rendered over, in reasonable condition but saturated. The solid floor has been renewed as before and appeared sound.

WC

The old ceilings was bowed. Wall plaster is old, with sections missing and generally damp. The lower part of the walls has been boarded out in match boarding to cover old plaster and dampness. The floor is a continuation of the original concrete tiled floor.

Sanitary fittings hot water supply and central heating

Sanitary fittings are all old, and plumbing was turned off. Hot water is supplied by an old foam lagged copper cylinder which is heated either directly by electric immersion, or indirectly by the old “Ideal Mexico” gas fired boiler adjoining, which also provides hot water for the panelled radiator central heating system. The fittings and boiler were not tested

Plumbing

The stopcock for the incoming rising mains water supply may be in the Council pavement on the left hand side of the building and should be confirmed. The underground cold water rising main supply was not inspected and if this is in original lead or iron pipe, allowance must be made for early replacement. There is an internal stopcock and branch off to the kitchen sink. The rising main feeds an old drained down pvc cold water storage tank housed on the roof terrace, which lacked a cover or thermal insulation, and a pvc header tank in a bedroom cupboard. There is a stopcock on the plumbing, visible in the basement toilet, which was not turned on.

Plumbing has been renewed in copper pipe where visible. Externally, the plumbing is in original separate cast-iron soil and waste pipes which should ideally be replaced by a single stack soil vent pipe.

The manhole cover to the house drains located in the right hand yard area was lifted, the drains were very shallow and appear to run across the full length of the building. The chamber was original and appeared in reasonable condition showing no signs of blockage. A test of the drains was not carried out.

Electrical supply

The underground mains supply enters the building under the front entrance steps and feeds an old mains fuse, meter and old replacement fuse box. There is evidence of some rewiring from the fuse box some years ago in PVC insulated cable. An electrical test was not carried out, but is recommended and allowance made for installation of additional power points and wiring, for modern day usage.

Gas supply

The incoming mains supply runs to a meter housed in the boiler cupboard. Plumbing was not tested.

CONCLUSION

The house is of standard construction for the period, was originally well built and shows only minimal movement and settlement in the main external walls, with slightly heavier settlement in internal walls and floors, which is to be expected and not considered serious.

The house is largely original, apart from the construction of the roof terrace and some internal reorganisation of rooms and blocking up of the old doorway to the left hand yard area.

It appears likely that the main slate roof coverings were renewed, many years ago, at the same time as replacement of the guttering. The coverings generally appeared sound with a few slipped and clipped back slates, however the old valley gutter is old and porous and needs replacing now, to prevent further water leaks.

A considerable amount of rainwater ingress has occurred in all parts of the building over a long period of time, due mainly to lack of external maintenance to roof coverings, flashings, copings and chimney stacks. Flat roofs are always vulnerable to water ingress and need a higher degree of maintenance than pitched roofs.

Most of the external maintenance and repairs have been carried out on a patch and repair basis only, rather than replacement of old coverings, in particular the flat roof coverings, which would have prevented much of the water penetration.

In buildings of this age and construction, it is vital that the exterior of the property is maintained to a high standard at all times, this will help prevent water ingress and the interior of the building will largely look after itself.

In buildings of this age, there are a large number of timbers built into the fabric, with timber lintels above window and door openings and timbers built in to support box gutters and the flat roofs. All these timbers are vulnerable to decay from water ingress. Where timbers are completely enclosed as in lintols, in flat roofs and box gutters, there is a further likelihood of dry rot fungus developing. Dry rot is a fungus which feeds on the cellulose of timber and develops and thrives in damp, dark, airless conditions and can extend considerable distances across and through brickwork and plaster. Where damp penetration has occurred for any length

of time, plaster surfaces should be removed to exposed vulnerable timbers for inspection and repair as necessary.

Most of the sash window frames are in extremely poor condition due to total lack of decoration over many years.

The walls in the basement will have suffered from rising and penetrating dampness since construction, as these will not have any vertical or horizontal damp proof course installations. Some of the walls have been dry lined to mask dampness, however, the only satisfactory method of dealing with dampness in basements is by drilling and injecting a suitable damp proof course and mass injection of retaining walls and tanking out the internal face of the external walls and any internal solid walls full height, in waterproofed sand and cement and providing a waterproof bond to the floors. Additional thermal insulation of external walls can also be installed if required.

Some of the floor coverings probably contain asbestos. Asbestos is a health hazard due to inhalation of asbestos particles and any materials present containing asbestos should be removed by a specialist company. This should be carried out before any works commence on site.

A list of the general defects requiring attention, points to be aware of and improvements recommended is summarised below:

1. Replace flat roof covering to the roof terrace.
2. Replace Valley gutter covering between the slate roof slopes draining the flat roof terrace when the scaffolding has been erected for external decoration.
3. Replace one number slipped slate.
4. When scaffolding has been erected allow for closer inspection of the old zinc back gutter to the right-hand flank chimney stack and replace as necessary in code 4 lead with code 4 lead cover flashings.
5. Consider complete replacement of the old flat roof and deck to the front entrance lobby and Hall area and insulate beneath, create larger outlet in flat roof.
6. Inspect box gutter draining mansard roof on left hand side as soon as possible, clean out and repair or replace gutter covering and any supporting defective timbers. Allow for

reinspection of the timbers prior to replacement of gutter covering.

7. Allow for clearing of the flat roofs, drainage outlets and the box gutter every autumn.
8. Allow for replacement of old rusted cast-iron rainwater downpipes at upper level on right hand side and remake joints to pipework.
9. Test all gutters and rainwater downpipes.
10. Fit clay ventilation cowls to all chimney pots where flues are no longer in use, to prevent excessive rainwater running down the flues and help prevent damp ingress.
11. Hack off and repair defective concrete flaunchings at the rear of the right-hand flank stack and on the left-hand side of the left hand party chimney stack.
12. Replace the old, weathered and wrong sized concrete coping stones along the top of the party parapet wall between and either side of the chimney stacks,and lay new copings on a continuous damp proof course,copings to have minimum 50 mm overhang on each sides and drip on the undersides, to provide protection to the walls beneath.
    Technically, a party structure notice should be served on the adjoining owner.
13. Carry out minor repointing of old cracks in the render on the chimney stacks.
14. Allow for extensive repair of old crumbling render and masonry forming the wall and parapet on the left hand return wall of the house in front of the mansard roof.
15. As an improvement, cut back rendering over the top of the parapet walls around the edge of the right hand flat roof and install coping stones laid on a continuous damp proof course, with suitable overhangs and drips as before.
16. Install a proper coping detail with suitable overhang and drip and lead flashings on the brick ledge on the dividing party boundary wall between No 21 and 23 to fully weatherproof the area and prevent water soaking into the building.
17. Carry out comprehensive repair and or replacement of timber windows.
18. Repair or replace the timber threshold to the front door.
19. Repair door lining to right hand basement side door and renew timber threshold, raise threshold minimum 50 mm above ground level to provide further protection from dampness.
20. Repair or replace the old timber barge boards on the Gable ends.
21. Carry out full external decoration to joinery this year and at 3 to 4 year intervals as necessary.
22. Repair or replace the rotted timber threshold to the front door.
23. Repair the front entrance steps to the house.
24. Repair side steps on the right-hand side.

25. Cut out old cracks and fractures in render on main walls of the house, hack off loose defective and damaged stucco render, re-render in sand, lime and cement to match existing, reform concrete cornice along the front wall at first floor level, thoroughly wash down all rendered surfaces, treat all bare surfaces with a masonry sealer and primer and apply two coats exterior grade masonry paint.
26. Carefully cut out areas of water stained and damaged ceiling and wall plaster, particularly around window and door openings and lintels above, and the lintols supporting the wall above the Bay and beneath and around the box gutter to examine timbers and brickwork for signs of any decay and dry rot, any timbers affected by dry rot must be treated by a specialist timber preservation company under minimum 30 year guarantee backed up by insurance indemnity.
27. Where the old ceiling plaster has partially collapsed in the first floor bedroom, carefully remove all loose adjoining plaster which has lost key, repair by double plasterboarding on ceiling joists, bond out in plaster with skim plaster finish.
28. Hack off loose defective and damp plaster on front wall in ground floor left hand living room, inspect for signs of dry rot, allow to thoroughly dry out and replaster.
29. Clear all rooms of furniture and fixtures and fittings in the basement, hack off all plaster full height, drill and mass inject a silicone dpc, allow walls to thoroughly dry out and carry out full tanking of the walls in three coat work sand and cement, with water proofing additive. All work should be carried out by a specialist company under minimum 20 year guarantee. The work must be bonded into the structure of the existing solid floor, providing this floor proved to be satisfactory and that there is a suitable damp proof membrane beneath the floor. Otherwise, full tanking out of the basement is recommended, including new floor.
30. In view of past extensive woodworm infestation in some of the floorboards, obtain details of any past timber treatment in the form of report, estimate and guarantee.
31. Replace broken and damaged floorboards.
32. Replace broken stone floor in front lobby.
33. Allow for replacement of the old cast-iron separate soil and waste pipes with a single stack soil vent pipe system.
34. Confirm the stopcock in the Council pavement on the left-hand side supplies the house.
35. If the underground rising mains supply is in original iron or lead, pipework, allow for complete renewal.
36. Remove cold water storage tank on flat roof, cap off plumbing and either re-install at

lower level or install a pressurised system to the sanitary fittings.

37. Service internal stopcocks on water pipes.
38. Power flush and recharge central heating system, arrange for full servicing of the system, including the boiler, controls, pumps and valves and allow for upgrading radiators and installing thermostatic valves. Replace any rusted radiators.
39. Arrange for testing of the electrical installation in the house and for installation of more power points throughout, for modern day usage.
40. Repair the brick walls and bases to the basement light wells at the front.

Provided the afore-mentioned works are carried out the property should be brought into a reasonably sound and weatherproof condition.

David Hanchet MRICS