

# COMMERCIAL BUILDING SURVEY

## Large Warehouse



FOR

**Mr X**

Prepared by:

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

Marketing by:

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# **INTRODUCTION**

Firstly, may we thank you for your instructions; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property.

The Building Survey takes the following format; there is an introductory section (which you are currently reading), which includes a synopsis of the building, and a summary of our findings.

We then go through a detailed examination of the property starting with the external areas working from the top of the property down, followed by the internal areas and the buildings services. We conclude with the section for your Legal Advisor and also attach some general information on the property market.

We are aware that a report of this size is somewhat daunting and almost off-putting to the reader because of this. We would stress that the purchase of a property is usually one of the largest financial outlays made (particularly when you consider the interest you pay as well).

We recommend that you set aside time to read the report in full, consider the comments, make notes of any areas which you wish to discuss further and phone us.

We obviously expect you to read the entire report but we would suggest that you initially look at the summary, which refers to various sections in the report, which we recommend you read first so that you get a general feel for the way the report is written.

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 to make a decision. Ultimately, the decision to purchase the property is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

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# **REPORT FORMAT**

To help you understand our Report we utilise various techniques and different styles and types of text, these are as follows:

## **GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

*This has been given in the survey where it is considered it will aid understanding of the issues, or be of interest. This is shown in "italics" for clarity.*

## **TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED**

Throughout the Report, we have endeavoured to define any technical terms used. This is shown in "Courier New" typeface for clarity.

## **A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS**



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil, pen or arrow has been used to highlight a specific area. The sketches are not 100% technically accurate; we certainly would not expect you to carry out work based upon the sketches alone.

## **ORIENTATION**

Any reference to left or right is taken from the front of the property, including observations to the rear, which you may not be able to physically see from the front of the property.

## **ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have used the term **ACTION REQUIRED** where we believe that there are items that you should carry out action upon or negotiate upon.

Where a problem is identified, we will do our best to offer a solution. However, with most building issues, there are usually many ways to resolve them dependent upon cost, time available and the length of time you wish the repair/replacement to last.

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## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

This is a detached two storey commercial property. It consists of a metal structural portal frame with brickwork to the front and part of the right hand side, with metal external cladding to all other sides. It has a main entrance door to the front right with a roller shutter door to the rear and various fire doors to the sides. The roof is shallow pitched and has not been inspected.

The commercial building is in an industrial area of various different styles and ages of commercial property. We noted there were a number up for sale and let at the time of our inspection.

The commercial building has the benefit of a car park to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the property) and an access and parking area to the delivery warehouse section of the building at the rear. It also has its own diesel / petrol pump, we assume with a diesel / petrol tank.

We believe that the building is from the 1970s/1980s. If the exact age of the property interests you your Legal Advisor may be able to find out more information from the Deeds.

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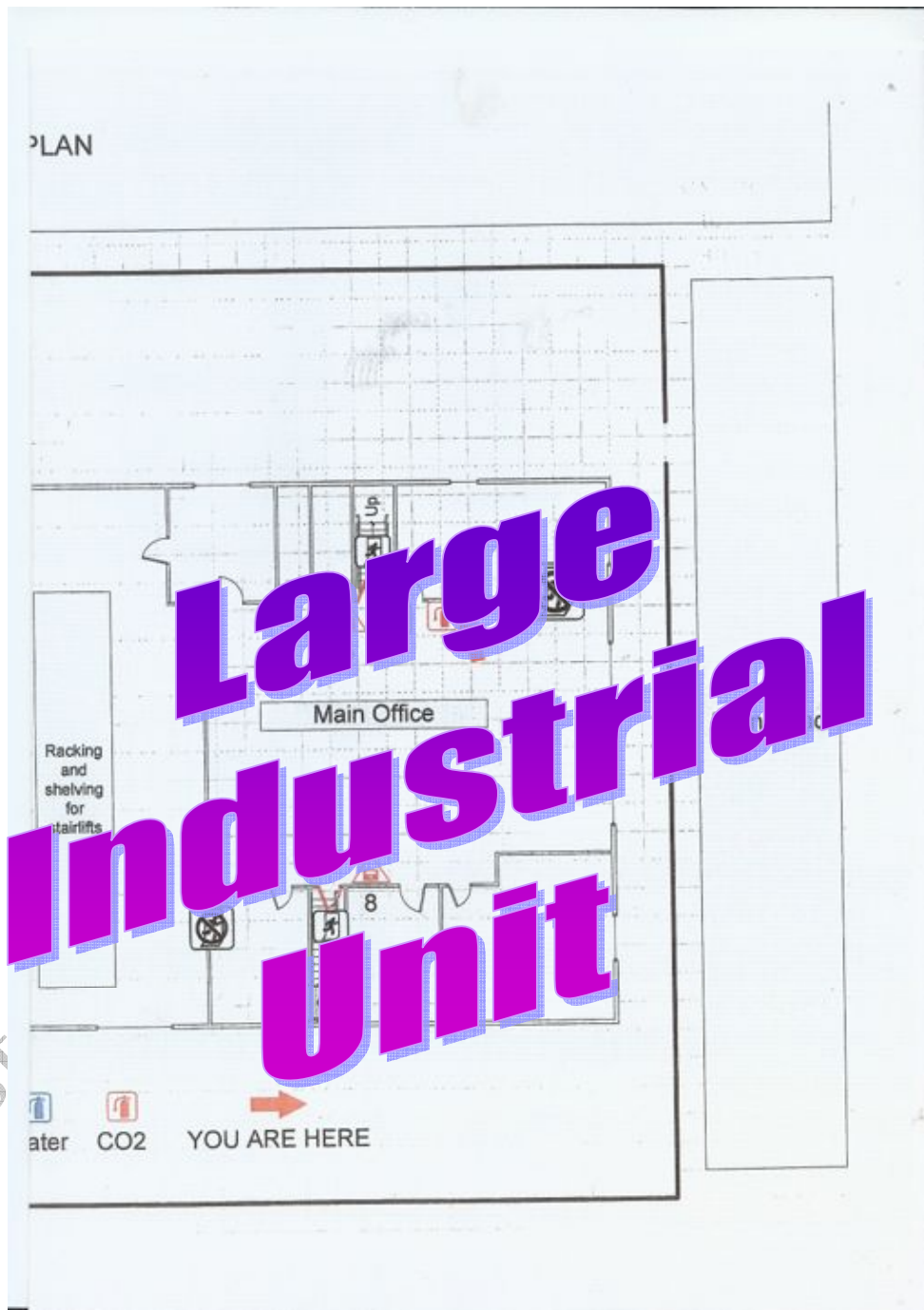
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## FLOOR PLANS

### Front of building



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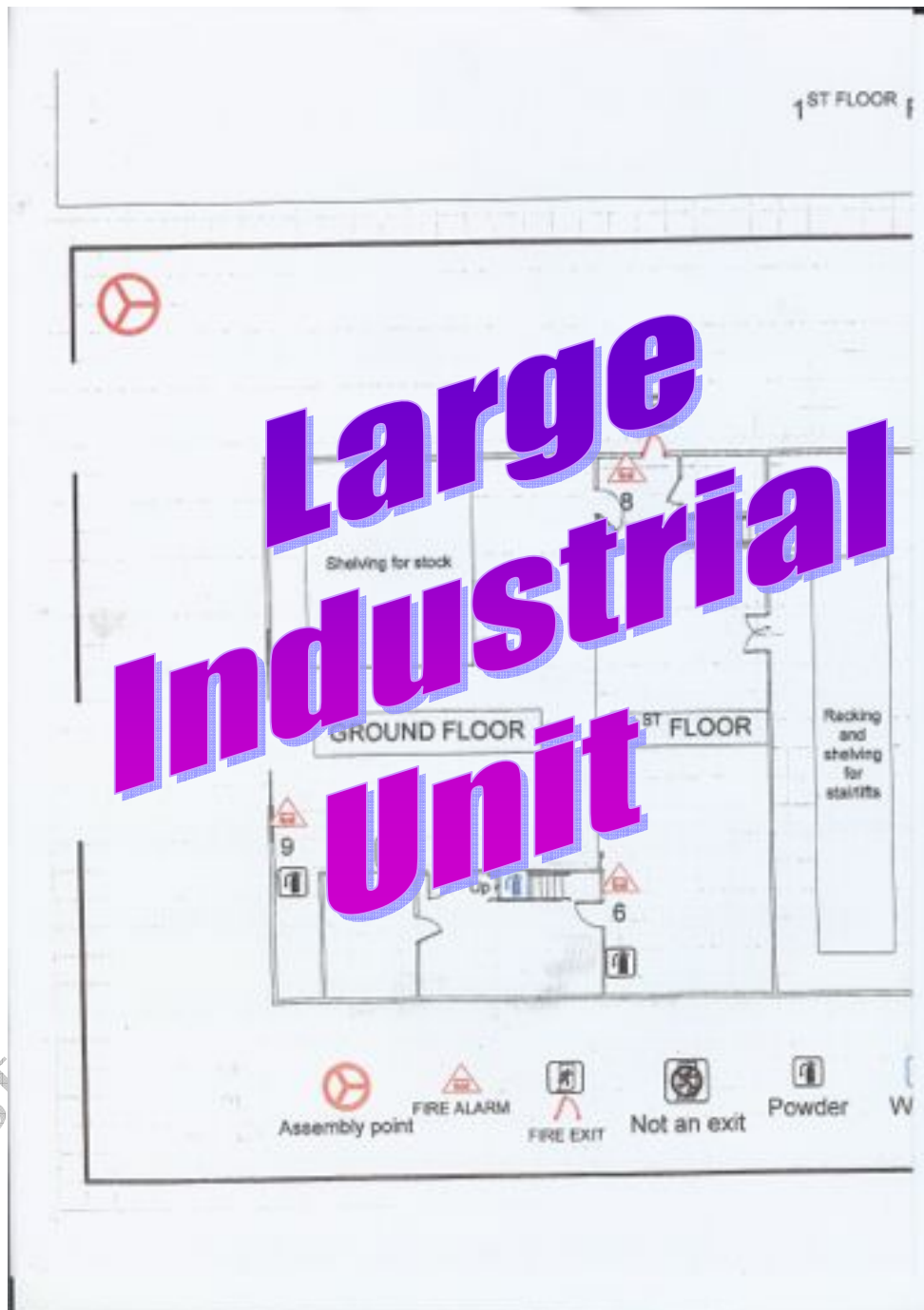
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Rear of building



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## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front Elevation



Rear View



Left hand view  
(taken from the front)



Right hand view  
(taken from the rear)



Car park



Diesel / petrol store

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# **FACILITIES**

## **Ground Floor**

### **Front of House**

- 1 Showroom to front
- 2 Toilet for disabled / less abled on right hand side

### **Back of House**

- 3 Stockroom area to rear
- 4 Toilet to rear
- 5 Office for Storeman on right hand side
- 6 Stairs on right hand side
- 7 Internal store and stair access to left hand side

## **First Floor**

- 1 Central open plan office
- 2 Three offices to left hand side
- 3 One office to right hand side
- 4 Kitchen / staff room area to right hand side (which gives access to first floor level racking and storage system)
- 5 Male and Female toilets to right hand side
- 6 Fire exit to left and right

## **Outside Areas**

The building has its own access and car parking is available, which is fenced. It also has a diesel / petrol pump area.

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## INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photos are of the internal of the property to help you recall what it looked like and the general ambience (or lack of). We have not necessarily taken photographs of each and every room.

### Ground Floor



Showroom left hand side



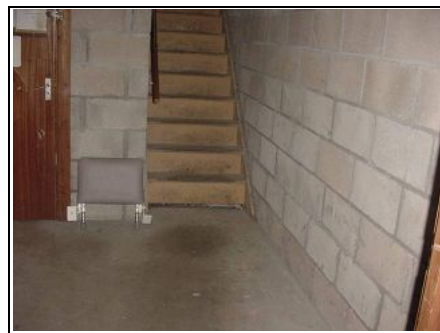
Show room right hand side



Disabled WC



Stock area rear right hand side



Stairs left hand side

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Stairs left hand side



Stairs right hand side



Store manager's office



Left hand view of store



Right hand view of store

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## First Floor



Central open plan office, looking  
towards left hand side



Front left hand office



Second office left hand side



Kitchen / staffroom



Right hand store

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Gents WC lobby



Gents WC



Ladies WC

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# **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

## **External**

Main Roof:	Shallow pitched metal profile roof
Gutters and Downpipes:	Profile metal gutters and plastic downpipes
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Internal, plastic where visible
Structural Frame:	Metal structural frame
Walls:	Profile metal sheeting, and Stretcher Bond Brickwork to front
Windows and Doors:	Plastic double glazed windows

## **Internal**

Ceilings:	Suspended ceilings / plasterboard / under lining at roof level (assumed)
Walls:	Dry lined/false wall to front showroom area on ground floor and office area on first floor (assumed) and to the rear they are profile cladding sheets (uninsulated)
Floors:	Ground Floor: Solid, assumed concrete
	First Floor: Joist and floorboard sheets (assumed) between "I" beams (metal structural frame of the property)

## **Services**

We believe that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, electricity and gas (all assumed). The main electric fuseboard is to the rear left hand corner, the gas supply meter is to the front right hand corner.

The above terms are explained in full in the main body of the Report.

We have used the term 'assumed' as we have not opened up the structure.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Summaries are not ideal as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs. This is particularly so in a summary about someone's future home when we are trying to second-guess what their priorities are, so it is important the Report is read in full.

It is inevitable with a report on a building of this nature that some of the issues we have focussed in on you may dismiss as irrelevant and some of the areas that we have decided are part of the 'character' of this property you may think are very important. We have taken in the region of 250 photographs (a CD copy of all photographs is enclosed) during the course of this survey and many pages of notes, so if an issue has not been discussed that you are interested in or concerned about, please phone and talk to us before you purchase the property (or indeed commit to purchasing the property), as we will more than likely have noted it and be able to comment upon it; if we have not we will happily go back.

We have divided the Executive Summary into 'Plus Points', 'Medium Priority' and 'High Priority', to allow you to clarify and focus on exactly what the issues are.

### **Plus Points**

*Survey reports often are full of only the faults and general 'doom and gloom', so we thought we would start with some positive comments on the property!*

- 1) The property is a portal frame / structural metal frame and as such allows for relatively easy alterations of the internal walls.
- 2) The property has its own parking area and its own access, directly on the road (as opposed to past adjoining businesses).
- 3) It has had various floors added over the years which may or may not be of use to you.

We are sure you can think of other things to add to this list.

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## **Medium Priority**

*Problems / issues raised in the medium priority section are usually solvable, but often need negotiation upon. However, a large number of them may sometimes put us off the property.*

### **1) Asbestos**

There is possibly asbestos within the roof of this property. It is generally a requirement to have an asbestos report carried out. We have spoken to the present owners about this who rang the agents whilst we were at the property, who we believe are organising an asbestos report.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ensure that all recommendations within this should have been carried out (we often find they are not and just the report is done); it is no good having the report without taking any action.

We are not asbestos surveyors.

Please see the Other Matters Section of this Report.

### **2) Leaking gutters**

We noted that the gutters did not appear to be working, as we could see vegetation growing from them and also we could see leaks at the joints.



Leaking gutter



Close up

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would always recommend that the gutters and downpipes are cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £1,000 to £3,000 as this is high level work and may require a tower scaffold. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Gutters and Downpipes Section of this Report.

### 3) Staining to ceiling tiles

We can see staining to the ceiling tiles. We believe this to relate to condensation as opposed to roof leaks (although we have not accessed the roof) and we can see this to the perimeter. In our experience a warm office during cold winter days can result in condensation to the underside of the roof.



Staining to ceiling

**ACTION REQUIRED:** A very difficult problem to solve completely in this era of property. We would recommend adding insulation and air conditioning units (cooling and heating units).

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £5,000 to £10,000, depending upon the amount of air conditioning units / air heating / air cooling units you have. Please obtain quotations.

Please see the Ceilings and Dampness Sections of this Report.

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#### 4) Cracking and dampness

We noted cracking to the floor (not to be confused with construction joints). This is covered to some extent by the carpets. This, combined with the dampness, means that the floor may be blistered and there may be hollow areas beneath it. Depending upon the weight that you are putting on the floor this may or may not be of importance.



Cracked joints



Construction joint

#### Construction joints defined

These are joints which are intentionally made in the floor structure.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** In a worst case scenario new sections of the floor would needed to be added in.

Please see the Floors Section of this Report.

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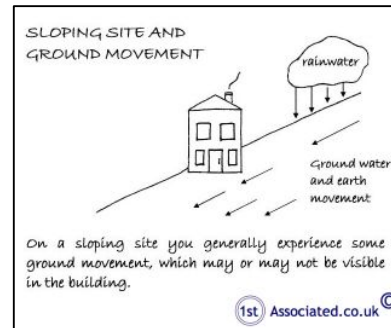
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## 5) Dampness to floor – sloping site

There is a high ground level on the left hand side (sloping site) which is allowing dampness into this area of the property and also into the concrete slab, which is acting like blotting paper. Unfortunately this side also dry lined.



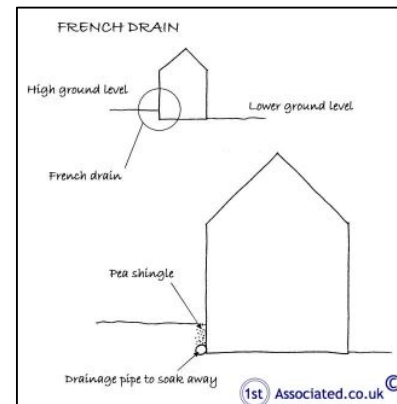
High ground level left hand side



Close up of high ground level

**ACTION REQUIRED:** A way round this would be to put a French drain along the left hand side of the property, although we could not see any drains for them to drain into so you may have to build a soakaway. Please see Appendices.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £5,000 to £10,000 depending upon whether you can connect into existing drains or not. Obtain quotations.



Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.

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## 6) Energy Efficiency

This industrial unit / office would not meet modern Energy Efficiency Standards. There is already evidence in the office market that companies are moving away from the less well insulated buildings to greener, more energy efficiency buildings.

There is also speculation within the chartered surveying world that more energy efficient buildings will extract the best premiums in years to come/be the best investments.

There is an option to upgrade and update but this is difficult to retro-fit. Effectively your building walls are a single skin of metal dividing you from the outside world, and to the roof there is a lined insulation board and then the metal roof.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** It depends how far you want to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** This can cover a broad range of costs. The dry lining of the walls in the office area is probably the most common way of increasing the thermal efficiency/heat comfort levels in the building.

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

## 7) Fire Regulations

We noted there was no separating fire stop or compartmentisation between the office areas and the storage areas. Depending upon what configuration you will have with the building we believe it is essential to have fire breaks added.



Shows the partitions raised above the suspended ceiling but not to the roof to form a fire break

### Fire break / fire wall defined

This is a physical barrier in a property to stop fire from spreading.

There is what looks to be an existing attempt at a fire barrier / fire wall, which is not sealed properly.



Messy division wall between stock room area and racking area



Close up

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Seal the existing fire wall / fire barrier properly and add in proper fire stops around the fire exit stair cases, as they did not look to meet the current half hour / one hour fire protection around escape routes.

We also recommend an upgraded fire alarm system that is hard wired into the existing electric system that identifies where a fire is within the office/industrial unit which means that people would be able to run away from the fire rather than not knowing where it is and perhaps running towards it.

Please check all the doors to ensure that they are fire doors, i.e. they have door closers and have half hour to an hour fire resistance depending upon where they are.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** It very much depends upon how you utilise the building.

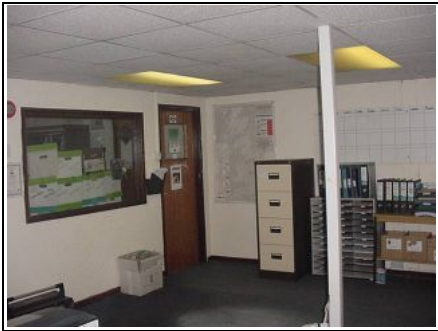
Please see the Other Matters Section of this Report.



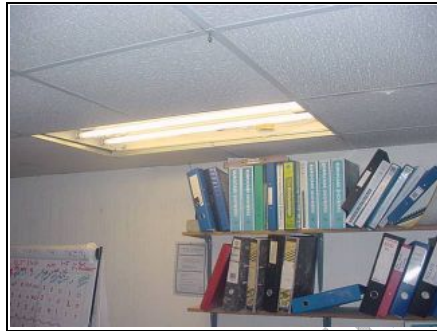
## 8) Services

### Lighting

The standard of lighting within the office is not to current standards, where it is normally recommended Category 2 lighting or equivalent, depending upon what is being carried on in the office.



Office lights



Old style fluorescent lights



Category 2 light

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Upgrade to Category 2 lights. There are many factors when upgrading that have to be take into consideration.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £5,000 to £7,000; please obtain quotations.

### Heating

The heating system used microbore pipes, which are smaller pipes than usual. We find that these tend to not work as efficiently, simply because the water cannot get round the smaller bore and then tends to block.



Microbore pipes

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We did not carry out a test of the system and suggest that you use it and see if it is sufficient/suitable for you and allow for a power wash of the system.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £1,000 to £2,000 as it normally brings up other elements as well. Please obtain quotes.

Please see the Services Section of this Report.

#### 9) **Noise Transfer**

We noted that when we were in the show room there was noise transfer from the office above.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** This may or may not be a problem to you depending upon what you wish to use the show room for, however if you wish it to be to modern standards then you will need to add insulation into this area and double line with plasterboard or similar.

#### **High Priority**

*We normally put here things that we feel will be difficult to resolve and will need serious consideration.*

There is nothing which we feel falls within this section providing you are happy with the characteristics of the property which we have mentioned throughout the report.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

## **Maintenance**

This type of property is relatively modern but nevertheless still requires ongoing maintenance and repair. A budget for such work must be allowed to ensure it is maintained in a good condition. This will prevent undue and unnecessary deterioration.

## **Services**

We have carried out a visual inspection of the services and no tests have been carried out. We would comment as follows in brief. More detail is within the main body of the report.

## **Electrics**

For the electrics we would recommend an Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test and report is carried out by an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent.



Electric fuseboard front right hand corner near stairway

## **Heating**

There are two heating systems on the property; one for the warehouse areas and one for the office areas.

We have mentioned within the Executive Summary about the microbore pipe system being used which we have not found to be that successful (it is not disastrous but nevertheless often we see it changed) and also there looks to be a warm air Parkway system.



Parkway heater which heats the stockroom area

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This has not been tested and we would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

### **Drainage**

We have not carried out any drainage tests. We would recommend a closed circuit TV camera report.

### **Services in General**

We would always recommend with regard to all services that you have an independent check by a specialist contractor.

### **Estimates of Building Costs**

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour and estimates can of course vary from area to area when giving a general indication of costs. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £100 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

If you obtain builders estimates that vary widely, we would advise the work is probably difficult or open to various interpretations and we would recommend a specification is prepared. It would usually be best to have work supervised if it is complex, both of which we can do if so required.

## **SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION**



The Summary Upon Reflection is a second summary so to speak, which is carried out when we are doing the second or third draft a few days after the initial survey when we have had time to reflect upon our thoughts on the property. We would add the following in this instance:

We would reiterate that we have spoken to the owner during the course of the survey and asked him whether he had various certificates, etc, which would be usual when selling a property, such as an asbestos report. He advised that he did not have an asbestos report but would be happy to have one carried out. As mentioned, he spoke to the agent at the time we were at the survey about carrying one out.

Other areas that we would normally see a report on are:

- 1) Electrics. An Institute of Electrical Engineers standard test by an NICEIC approved electrician.
- 2) Gas. A check by a Gas Safe heating engineer.

In addition to this you have a petrol/diesel unit which we assume has a tank with it. As far as we are aware these tanks should be tested fairly regularly to ensure they do not leak into the ground and tests should be carried out also in relation to this.

We assume that your legal adviser will gather all the certificates etc. If not, please contact us.

As a general comment for any work required we would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion.

We would ask that you read the Report and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

# **MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT**

Just a few more comments about the Report format before you read the actual main body of the Report.

## **TENURE – FREEHOLD (OR AS GOOD AS)**

We have assumed that the property is to be sold Freehold or Long leasehold, with no unusual or onerous clauses and that vacant possession will be available on completion. Your Legal Advisor should confirm that this is the case.

## **ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?**

It is important to remember that the estate agents are acting for the seller (usually known as the vendor) and not the purchaser and are therefore eager to sell the property (no sale – no fee!). We as your employed Independent Chartered Surveyor represent your interests only.

## **SOLICITOR/LEGAL ADVISOR**

To carry out your legal work you can use a solicitor or a legal advisor. We have used both terms within the report.

## **TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement for Residential Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen and signed a copy of our terms of engagement please phone immediately.

## **OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION**

Our aim is for you to be completely happy with the service we provide, and we will try and help you in whatever way possible with your property purchase - just phone us.

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**THE DETAILED PART OF THE REPORT  
FOLLOWS, WORKING FROM THE TOP  
OF THE PROPERTY DOWNWARDS**



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## **EXTERNAL**

### **ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS**

*The Roof Coverings and Underlayers section considers the condition of the outer covering of the roof. Such coverings usually endure the extremes of climate and temperatures. They are susceptible to deterioration, which ultimately leads to water penetration.*

*Dependent upon the age of your property and the type of construction it may or may not be present, please read on:*

#### **Main Roof**

The roof is a shallow pitched metal profile roof. We were unable to view the main roof. Internally there are no visual signs on the under cladding to indicate major problems with the roof. Viewing a roof from the under side is never as good as viewing it from the top, which we would be happy to do but we would need to hire platforms and a tower scaffold.



Under cladding

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ideally inspect the roof via a lifting platform.

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## **Roof Windows**

**(Known as roof lights or Velux windows which is the trade or generic name)**

The property has many corrugated roof lights, that look in reasonable condition with no obvious visual signs internally of major water leaks. They do look as if they would benefit from cleaning, but other than this we would say it seems inevitable that the roof windows may sooner or later leak. If this does not occur then particularly in office areas they seem prone to condensation. A true test with regard to a roof light is to inspect them when it next rains and we recommend this is carried out.



Roof window / skylight

All the roofs were inspected from ground level with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera.

Finally, we were unable to see any of the main roof via ladders or via any other vantage point that we managed to gain. We have made our best conclusions based upon what we could see, however a closer inspection may reveal other defects.

For further comments with regard to ventilation please see the Roof Structure and Loft Section.

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# **ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT**

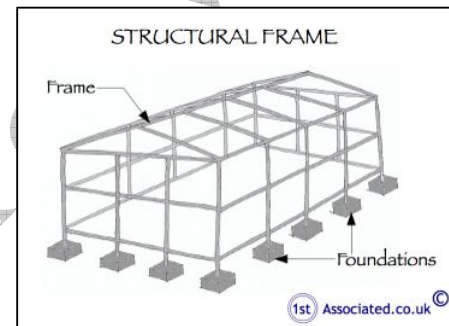
## **(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)**

*The roof structure or framework must be built in a manner which is able to give adequate strength to carry its own weight together with that of the roof covering discussed in the previous section and any superimposed loads such as snow, wind, foot traffic etc.*

### **Main Roof**

#### **Roof Structure**

The roof is a metal portal frame with wind bracing. It is a bolted together roof system (as opposed to welded). This is formed in 'I' beams which gives support to the metal purlins.



General view of metal portal frame roof



Bolted together wind brace



'I' beam supporting purlin which then supports the under cladding.

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Wall 'I' beam meets roof purlin



Silver metal purlin gaining support off the portal frame

### **Insulation**

The roof is under clad. Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

### **Electrical Cables**

We can often identify the age of an electrical installation by the age of wiring found above the suspended ceiling. In this case we could see sufficiently to see that the lighting was dated; probably original. Bearing in mind the lights no longer meet general office standards and will have to be upgraded, it will be a good time to upgrade these generally.

Please see our further comments in the Services Section of this Report.

Finally, we would ask you to note that this is a general inspection of the roof, i.e. we have not examined every single piece of timber. We have offered a general overview of the condition and structural integrity of the area.

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## **GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES**

*The function of the gutters and downpipes is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.*

*Defective gutters and downpipes are a common cause of dampness that can, in turn, lead to the development of rot in timbers. Regular inspection and adequate maintenance are therefore essential if serious problems are to be avoided.*

### **Gutters and Downpipes**

The property has profile metal gutters and plastic downpipes. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary regarding the leaking gutters. We also noted areas of vegetation growing out of them indicating they have not been cleaned for some time and this will in turn cause leaks.



Leaking gutter right hand side



Close up of leaking gutter



Vegetation growing out of gutter

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

### **Soil and Vent Pipe**

The internal soil and vent pipes are internal and not fully visible.

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Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected from ground level. As it was not raining at the time of the inspection it is not possible to confirm 100 per cent that the rainwater installation is free from blockage, leakage etc. or that it is capable of coping with long periods of heavy rainfall. Our comments have therefore been based on our best assumptions.

There may be some painted asbestos pipes at high level. It is very difficult to identify these from ground level. Our comments are therefore based upon our best assumptions.

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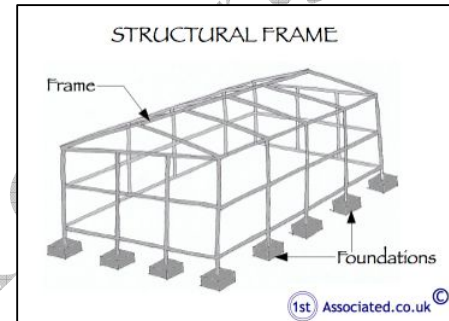
# WALLS

*External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.*

The property is constructed using profile metal sheet cladding on to vertical 'I' beams, with the exception of the front elevation where there is brickwork, which is in a Stretcher Bond.

## Structural Frame

The property is constructed with profile metal sheeting.



## General damage to the cladding

The following shows general damage to the cladding, which is mainly from impact damage caused by vehicles to the right hand side of the property (all directions given as you face the property). However, there are also some areas where the fixing bolts do not seem to have any end caps.



Taking an end cap off



Missing end cap



Fixing bolts missing altogether  
need to be replaced

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Impact damage caused by cars

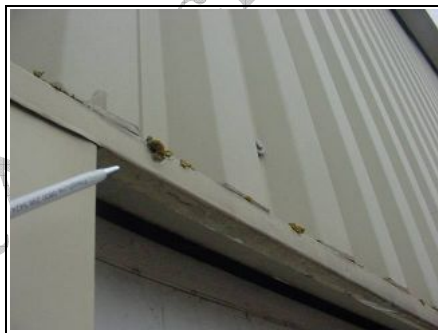


Low level impact damage – very difficult to repair and much better to put a barrier up to stop the cars running into it.



Minor impact damage

### Detailed Problems



There are some areas where ledges have been formed and areas where water can be held



Mastic seals going around the windows would benefit from being repaired.

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Generally the repairs we have mentioned are about making the building watertight in the longer term.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** It is well worth sending someone round with a pack of end caps to fit on to the bolts that fix the cladding in, as these will ultimately rust away.

### **Brickwork**

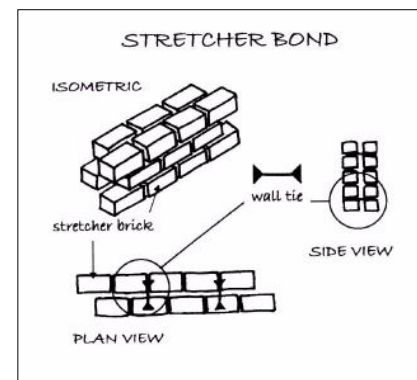
The term "Stretcher Bond" means that from the outside of the property, you can see a row of the sides of the bricks (known as "stretchers") followed by a course above of the same stretch of bricks set off so the joint is centrally above the "stretcher". This pattern would repeat throughout.



Stretcher bond brickwork

Cavity walls were first used in Victorian times. It originates from solid walls not always being waterproof against driving rain and not providing a good degree of heat insulation. The design of cavity walls makes them relatively unstable and they depend upon the wall ties.

Walls of cavity construction should incorporate ties to hold together the inner and outer leaves of masonry. As there is no access to the cavity it has not been inspected and we cannot comment on the presence or condition of wall ties.



There is minor efflorescence which indicates the brickwork is getting wet and not drying.

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly via a ladder. Where the window and door lintels are concealed by profile metal cladding / brickwork / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age metal lintels are common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

Our comments have been based upon how the profile metal cladding / brickwork / plaster has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think the profile metal cladding / brickwork / plaster would be if it were opened up for this age, style and type of construction. We are however aware that all is not always as it seems in the building industry and often short cuts are taken. Without opening up the structure we have no way of establishing this.

## **FOUNDATIONS**

*The foundations function is, if suitably designed and constructed, to transfer the weight of the property through the soil. As a general comment, many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or no foundations, as we think of them today, and typically a two-storey property would have one metre deep foundations.*

### **Foundations**

Given the age of the property you may find different depths of foundations. We would expect to find pad foundations.

### **Building Insurance Policy**

You should ensure that the Building Insurance Policy contains adequate provision against any possibility of damage arising through subsidence, landslip, heave etc.

It is your responsibility to check out prior to commitment to purchase that insurance is available on the property on the basis of the things we have reported in the survey. Much as we would like to we are unable to keep up with the changing insurance market and give you advice with regard to this. Please remember to talk about any cracks identified within the property. Often insurers will refer to progressive and non-progressive cracking. Unfortunately this is something we are unable to comment upon from a one-off inspection - the Building Research Establishment recommend a year of monitoring of any cracking.

We would always recommend that you remain with the existing insurance company of the property.

We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance throughout this report.

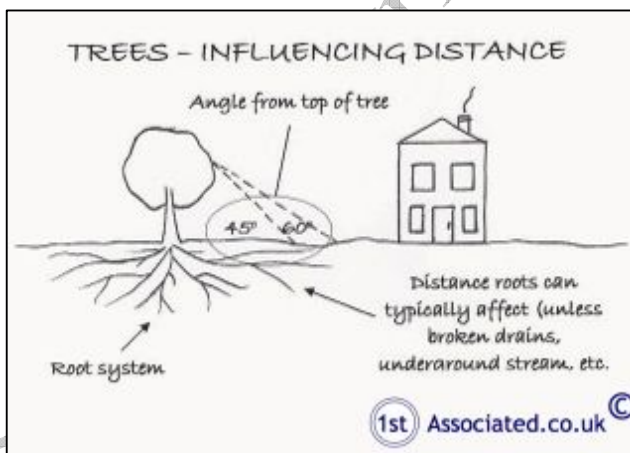
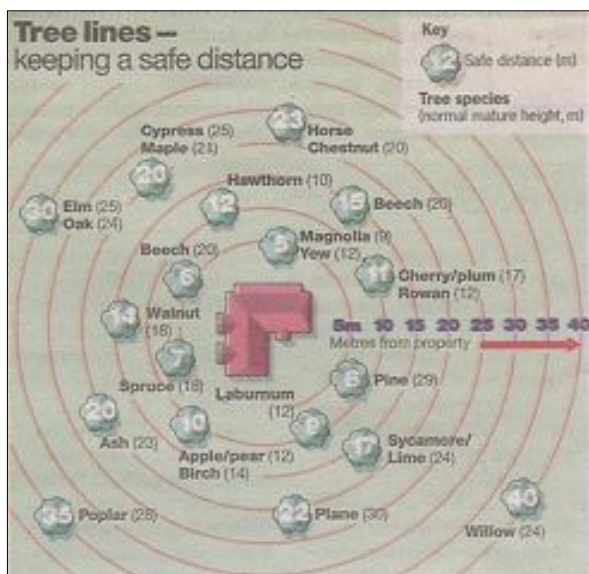
Finally, we have not excavated the foundations but we have drawn conclusions from our inspection and our general knowledge of this type, age and style of property. As no excavation has been carried out we cannot be 100 percent certain as to how the foundation has been constructed and we can only offer our best assumptions and an educated guess, which we have duly done.

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# TREES

*Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.*

There are no trees within what insurance companies term as influencing distance of the property.



## Influencing Distance Defined

This is the distance in which a tree may be able to cause damage to the subject property. It is not quite as simple as our sketch; it depends on the tree, its maturity, the soil type etc., etc.

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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## **DAMP PROOF COURSE**

*The Building Act of 1878 required a damp proof course to be added to all newly built properties within the London area. It also required various other basic standards. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout London and then the country as a whole, although this took many years for it to become standard practice.*

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, we can see a plastic DPC.



Pen indicates DPC

Finally, sometimes it is difficult for us to identify if there is a damp proof course in a property. We have made our best assumptions based upon our general knowledge of the age, type and style of this property.

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# **WINDOWS AND DOORS**

*This section covers windows and doors, and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.*

*Windows primary functions are to admit light and air, but they also have thermal and sound properties. The doors allow access and egress within the property.*

## **Windows and Doors**

The property has plastic double glazed windows, which look to be below average quality. The seals around them have deteriorated. Failure of the seal leads to condensation between the two panes of glass and simply replacing the affected units may not provide a satisfactory long-term solution.



Plastic windows close up.  
Plastic sill needs re-sealing

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Re-seal.

Enquiries should be made as to the existence of any transferable guarantees. Generally it is considered that double glazed units have a life of about ten years.

## **Roller Shutter Doors**

We have not seen the roller shutter door in action. There was some impact damage around it.



Paint around roller shutter door

Finally, we have carried out a general and random inspection of the external joinery. In the case of the fascias and soffits it is typically a visual inspection from ground level. With the windows and doors we have usually opened a random selection of these during the course of the survey. In this section we are aiming to give a general overview of the condition of the external joinery. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

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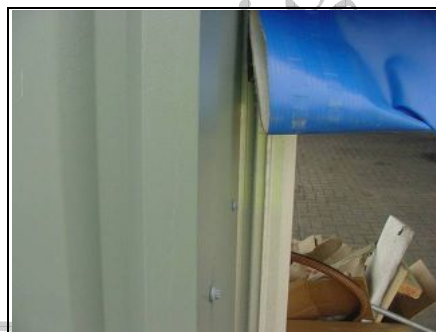
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## **EXTERNAL DECORATIONS**

*The external decorations act as a protective coat for the building from the elements. Where this protective covering has failed, such as with flaking paintwork, the elements will infiltrate the structure. This is of particular concern as water is one of the major factors in damage to any structure.*

With profile metal cladding we are finding that the proprietary plastic based coating that was put on them is starting to fade over the years. We often find rusting where there has been a cut joint, however unfortunately to replace one panel means that they stand out considerably.



There is an argument that it is worth replacing this type of original single skin panel with a double skin panel with insulation within it (as per photo example).

An example of an insulated panel

Finally, ideally external redecoration is recommended every four to five years dependent upon the original age of the paint, its exposure to the elements and the materials properties. Where painting takes place outside this maintenance cycle repairs should be expected. Ideally redecoration should be carried out during the better weather between mid-April and mid-September.

Please see our comments in the External Joinery section.

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## INTERNAL

### CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

*In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions.*

#### Ceilings

From our visual inspection of the ceilings and our general knowledge we would comment that the ceilings to the office are a square ceiling tile within an exposed grid. There are areas of plasterboard, for example to the kitchenette/staffroom and the fire escapes.



Square ceiling tiles within exposed grid in office area



Fire escape plasterboard ceiling

The fire escape area should give a half hour fire resistance; please see our comments with regard to a lack of a fire break as far as we could see, which needs adding.

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The ceiling to the warehouse area is under clad which typically is an insulated board, although we cannot see without opening up the structure. This insulated board is also above the suspended ceiling.



Under cladding above  
suspended ceiling



Plasterboard ceiling in show room  
area, we assume on to a joist and  
floorboard construction above

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our Executive Summary with regard to our comments on staining to some of the ceiling tiles.

#### Plasterboard Defined

The usual name for Gypsum plasterboard which is building board with a core of aerated gypsum, usually enclosed between two sheets of heavy paper, used as a dry lining.

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## **Internal Walls and Partitions**

The walls are predominantly in blockwork, which we would say is almost DIY standard in some areas (please see photos below). It could be dry lined to hide it. It is of course impossible to determine the construction without opening up the walls and have therefore taken an educated guess.



DIY quality building of right hand office



Joist ends not properly supported



Front right hand office – structural beam coming through office

## **Internal walls that have been added within the warehouse**

There have been several internal walls added within the warehouse that have also had floors added. In theory, this should have Building Regulations Approval, which we would expect this company to have had carried out, but nevertheless we would recommend your legal adviser checks and confirms.



Added storage area on right hand side



Added RSJ forming support for the first floor timber joists above

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We were advised that the joists did not appear to be sitting on the blockwork fully.



Joists not sitting into blockwork walls properly – DIY Standard



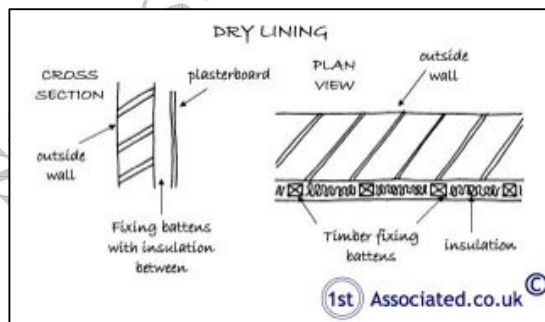
Close up

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal adviser to check and confirm that Building Regulations Approval has been applied for with regard to internal alterations. We would see 'I' beams have been added that make additional storage space and an RSJ has been added.

Please advise us immediately if these alterations have not had Buildings Regulations Approval.

## Perimeter Walls

These have been dry lined in the office area.



Dry lining in front of wall cladding  
(front left hand side)

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Finally, ceilings, walls and partitions have been inspected from floor level and no opening up has been undertaken (unless permission has been obtained by yourselves). In some cases the materials employed cannot be ascertained without samples being taken and damage being caused.

We cannot comment upon the condition of the structure hidden behind plaster, dry lining, other applied finishes, heavy furniture, fittings and kitchen units with fitted back panels.

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## **FLOORS**

*Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.*

### **Ground Floor**

The ground floor is solid under foot so we have assumed is concrete. There is damp on the left hand side in the fire exit area.



Pen indicates hairline cracking



High damp meter readings were gained in the fire exit area on left hand side



Damage to floor



Show room floor damaged

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

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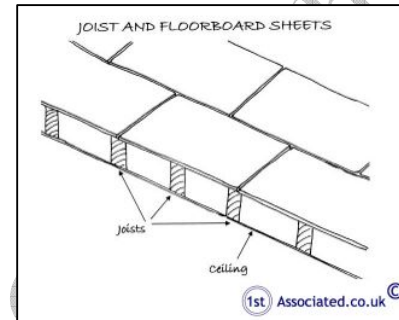
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## **First Floor**

We have assumed that the first floor construction is joist and floorboard sheets, as this is typical in this age of property.

### Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

These are usually at first floor level consisting of a joist supported from the external walls, either built in or, in more modern times, sitting upon joist hangers, sometimes taking additional support from internal walls, with floorboards fixed down upon it.



Finally, we have not been able to view the actual floors themselves due to them being covered with floor coverings / carpets. The comments we have made are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction. We would emphasise that we have not opened up the floors in any way or lifted any floorboards.

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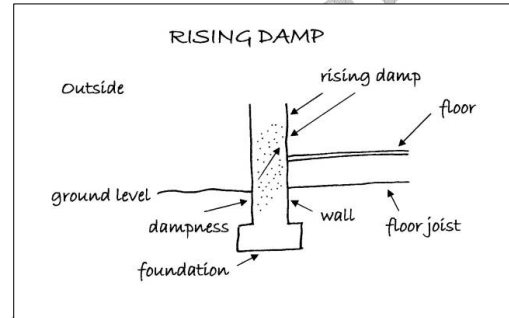
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# **DAMPNESS**

*In this section we look at any problems that are being caused by dampness. It is therefore essential to diagnose the source of the dampness and to treat the actual cause and not the effect of the dampness.*

## **Rising Damp**

*Rising damp depends upon various components including the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation of the material, amongst other things. Rising damp can come from the ground, drawn by capillary action, to varying degrees of intensity and height into the materials above. There is now great scepticism that true rising damp rarely occurs. We can advise you further on this if you so wish.*

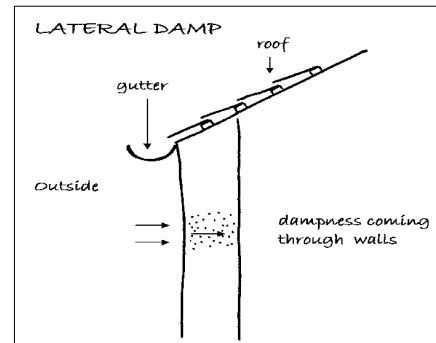


A random visual inspection and tests with a moisture meter have been taken to the perimeter walls. In this particular case we have found rising damp to the left hand side of the property (all directions given as you face the property).

## **Lateral or Penetrating Dampness**

*This is where water ingress occurs through the walls. This can be for various reasons such as poor pointing or wall materials or inadequate gutters and downpipes, such as poorly jointed gutters.*

We were unable to check the walls for lateral dampness due to the dry lining. There would not normally be a problem unless the property was predominantly brickwork construction and this is limited in this case to part of the front right hand side.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

## **Condensation**

*This is where the humidity held within the air meets a cold surface causing condensation.*

At the time of the inspection there were obvious signs of condensation.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

It depends upon how you utilise the building. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating and ventilation of properties. Normal airing of the property will resolve condensation problems.

Finally, effective testing was prevented in areas concealed by heavy furniture, fixtures such as kitchen fittings with backboards, wall tiles and wall panelling. We have not carried out tests to BRE Digest 245, but only carried out a visual inspection.

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# **INTERNAL JOINERY**

*This section looks at the doors, the stairway, the skirting boards and the kitchen to give a general overview of the internal joinery's condition.*

## **Doors**

The property has a mixture of standard doors and fire doors. As mentioned, there should be compartmentisation in some areas, such as the fire exits and we believe between the office area and the warehouse, though this will be very much specific to how you operate in the property.

## **Fire Doors**

In a property such as this it is fire doors that we are most concerned about as fire doors offer a break in a worst case scenario where a fire occurs we therefore recommend checking the doors to the fire escape roots and any high risk areas you may have within your operation.



Fire break without the fire door!



Fire exit stairs

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## **Staircases**

We were unable to examine the underside of the stair timbers due to it being lined, which precluded our inspection, so we cannot comment further upon the stair structure. We can, however, say that the lining gives a resistance to the spread of fire if such circumstances were to occur. The stairs are timber constructed rather than being pre-fabricated.



Lined staircase

**ACTION REQUIRED:** As you can see from the above photo, this would benefit from having the plasterboard re-fixed and there is also a missing section at the bottom so we would check all under side of stairs.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** A few hundred pounds. A worst case scenario would mean re-lining the stairs.

Finally, it should be noted that not all joinery has been inspected. We have viewed a random sample and visually inspected these to give a general overview of the condition. Please also see the External Joinery/Detailing section.

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## **TIMBER DEFECTS**

*This section considers dry rot, wet rot and woodworm. Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi, both need moisture to develop and both can be very expensive to correct. We would also add that in our experience they are also often wrongly diagnosed.*

In this type of construction this is not as essential as in a more traditional construction as the metal frame is the structural element rather than the timber.

### **Dry Rot**

*Dry rot is also sometimes known by its Latin name *Serpula lacrymans*. Dry rot requires constant dampness together with a warmish atmosphere and can lead to extensive decay in timber.*

We have not visually seen any dry rot during the course of our inspection. We would advise that we have not opened up the floors.

### **Wet Rot**

*Wet rot, also known by its Latin name *Contiophora puteana*, is far more common than dry rot. Wet rot darkens and softens the wood and is most commonly seen in window and doorframes, where it can relatively easily be remedied. Where wet rot affects the structural timbers in a property, which are those in the roof and the floor areas, it is more serious.*

Again, we have not visually seen any wet rot during the course of our inspection. We would advise that we have not opened up the floors.

### **Woodworm**



*Active woodworm can cause significant damage to timber. There are a variety of woodworm that cause different levels of damage with probably the worst of the most well known being the Death Watch Beetle. Many older properties have woodworm that is no longer active, this can often be considered as part of the overall character of the property.*

The floor is the main area that we look for woodworm.

Within the floor we found no obvious visual signs of woodworm activity or indeed signs of past woodworm activity that has caused what we would term 'structurally significant' damage.

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you wish to be 100 per cent certain that there is no woodworm the only way would be to check the property when is emptied of fixtures and fittings etc.

We need to reiterate our earlier comment that in a structural metal frame building the timber elements are not as critical.

Finally, when you move into the property, floor surfaces should be carefully examined for any signs of insect infestation when furniture and floor coverings are removed together with stored goods. Any signs that are found should be treated to prevent it spreading. However, you need to be aware that many damp and woodworm treatment companies have a vested interest in selling their products and therefore have fairly cleverly worded quotations where they do not state if the woodworm they have found is 'active'. You should ask them specifically if the woodworm is active or not.

We would also comment that any work carried out should have an insurance backed guarantee to ensure that if the company does not exist, or for whatever reason, the guarantee is still valid. More importantly it is essential to ensure that any work carried out is carried out correctly.

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## **INTERNAL DECORATIONS**

*With paints it should be remembered that up to 1992 lead could be used within paint and prior to this most textured paints (commonly known as Artex) contained an element of asbestos up to 1984, so care should be taken if the paintwork looks old and dated.*

We would term the decoration as dated within the property and would benefit from being redecorated.

Finally, we would draw your attention to the fact that removal of existing decorative finishes may cause damage to the underlying plasterwork necessitating repairs and making good prior to redecoration.

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## **THERMAL EFFICIENCY**

*Up until the mid 1940s we did not really consider thermal efficiency in properties. Post war insulation started to be introduced as part of the mass rebuilding program. In the 1970s due to the fuel crisis thermal efficiency means were introduced. In more recent years there has been an emphasis on energy efficiency with the limited fossil fuels and our environmental impacted.*

*Whilst we like innovation in the property industry, and it is something that is poor when compared to other industries, care has to be taken with new technologies and new ways of building to ensure we do not cause other problems.*

### **Roofs**

You have what looks like an insulated underlining. To give a general idea current Building Regulations requirements on a domestic house is 300mm.

### **Walls**

The walls are predominantly a thin metal profile cladding panel without insulation, as far as we can see, with the exception of where it is dry lined to the office area. The building in this section also has stretcher bond front as well and will be to average standard for this age of property. Our concern is the heat transferring through the walls and the roof, particularly within the warehouse area.

### **Windows**

The windows are double glazed and therefore will have reasonable thermal properties.

### **Services**

You have a variety of heating methods in the property so service records should be obtained. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently.

### **Summary**

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average compared with what we typically see.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **SERVICES**

This survey does not include any specialist reports on the electricity supply and circuits, heating or drainage, as they were not requested. The comments that follow are based upon a visual inspection carried out as part of the overall Survey.

Services and specialist installations have been visually inspected. It is impossible to examine every detail of these installations without partially dismantling the structure. Tests have not been applied. Conclusive tests can only be undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. The vendor/seller should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

### **Electrics**

The electrics are likely to require complete renewal however we would recommend in the first instance an Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) test and report by an NICEIC approved electrician or equivalent.

### **Heating**

The property has via gas heaters and a Parkway air heater.

### **Fuel – Gas/Oil**

The respective safety standards to be applied and most full repairing and insuring leases require a test certificate. All services to Gas Safe Standard or equivalent.

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Oil tank



Gas front right hand corner in showroom

We also noted a diesel / petrol shed. Please see our comments elsewhere within this report.



Diesel / petrol shed

### **Lighting**

There is some modern lighting and some older style light which needs updating.

### **Fire Regulations**

This really does depend upon how you utilise the property. As mentioned within the report we do not feel there are sufficient fire walls at present.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You should have a suitable Fire Safety Notice.

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## **Disability Discrimination Act**

You should be aware that it is now a requirement to give reasonable access to the disabled and make reasonable amendments to the property as is necessary to accommodate them. As you will expect in a building selling aids for the elderly thought and consideration for the less abled/disabled has been given on the ground floor, with the toilets, etc.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You should ask to see if a report has been carried out in line with the Disabilities Act highlighting areas that can be improved or have been improved.

## **Asbestos Register**

It is now a requirement for any public building to have an asbestos register, indicating whether there is or is not asbestos and if so where it is. The present owner advised that he would have an asbestos report carried out.

In this age of property there is a danger that the roof has been under and over clad and is hiding the asbestos within. This can be very costly if this is not identified.



Possible asbestos where flue goes through roof

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary. An asbestos register should be provided by the owner/occupier. As mentioned, they rang the agents whilst we were at the property when we discussed this and we would specifically request any asbestos contractor to advise whether there is any asbestos in the roof.

You should note that work involving products containing asbestos is covered by Health and Safety legislation and you are recommended to seek the advice of the Local Authority Environmental Health Officer before proceeding with any such work.

We are not asbestos surveyors.

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## **Drains**

We have not carried out a drainage test. We would recommend that a closed circuit TV camera report is carried out.

## **Service Pipes**

We have not checked the service pipes other than running the taps for approximately fifteen minutes when they had a steady flow of water.

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## OUTDOOR AREAS

We noted that the car park is spalling and the fence is rusting and would benefit from redecoration.



View of car park with a spalling surface



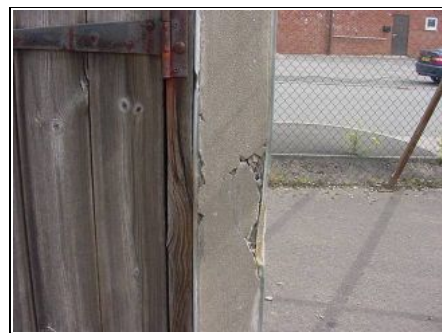
Lightweight manhole cover in car park and has dipped



Rusting fence / entrance gate



Diesel / petrol shed



Render repairs to diesel shed

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Redecorate fence and render to diesel / petrol shed.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £2,000 to £3,000; please obtain quotes

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It is our policy not to offer a conclusion to ensure that the Building Survey is read in full and the comments are taken in context.

If you would like any further advice on any of the issues discussed (or indeed any that have not been discussed!) then please do not hesitate to contact us on **0800 298 5424**.

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# **LIMITATIONS**

Our limitations are as the agreed Terms and Conditions of Engagement.

## **CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT**

The report has been prepared in accordance with our Conditions of Engagement and should be regarded as a comment on the overall condition of the property and the quality of its structure and not as an inventory of every single defect. It 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 defects can subsequently develop particularly if you do not follow the recommendations.

## **ENGLISH LAW**

We would remind you that this report should not be published or reproduced in any way without the surveyor's expressed permission and is governed by English Law and any dispute arising there from shall be adjudicated upon only by the English Courts.

## **SOLE USE**

This report is for the sole use of the named Client and is confidential to the Client and his professional advisors. Any other persons rely on the Report at their own risk.

## **ONLY HUMAN!**

Although we are pointing out the obvious, our Surveyors obviously can't see through walls, floors, heavy furniture, fixed kitchen units etc. they have therefore made their best assumptions in these areas.

As this is a one off inspection, we cannot guarantee that there are no other defects than those mentioned in the report and also that defects can subsequently develop.

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## **WEATHER**

It was a mild summer's day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

Our weather seems to be moving towards the extremities from relatively mid range.

## **NOT LOCAL**

It should be noted that we are not local surveyors to this area and are carrying out the work without the benefits of local knowledge on such things as soil conditions, aeroplane flight paths, and common defects in materials used in the area etc.

## **OCCUPIED PROPERTY**

The property was occupied at the time of our survey, which meant that there were various difficulties when carrying out the survey such as stored items within cupboards, the loft space and obviously day-to-day household goods throughout the property. We have, however, done our best to work around these.

## **INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to:

not opening up the floors

not having any access to the roof

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## **BUILDING INSURANCE**

We do not advise with regard to building insurance. You need to make your own enquiries. Some areas may have a premium, some buildings may have a premium and some insurers may be unwilling to insure at all in certain areas. You need to make your own enquires prior to committing to purchase the property. Please be aware the fact a building is currently insured does not mean it can be re insured.

We would comment that non-insurability of a building we feel will affect value. It is therefore essential to make your own enquiries with regard to insurance before committing to purchase the property and incurring fees.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to contact an insurance company today to make enquiries with regard to insurance on this property.

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Our computer system sends two copies of our Terms and Conditions to the email address given to us when booking the survey; one has the terms attached and the other has links to the Terms and Conditions on our website (for a limited time). If you have not received these please phone your contact immediately.

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# APPENDICES

2. User Classes
3. French drains article

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## Use Classes Order 2005

It is recommended that you confirm the position of each case with the Council's Planning Department  
Correct Summer 2005

TCPA Use Classes Order 2005 (Effective 21 April 2005)	Use/Description of development	Permitted Change to another use class
<b>A1</b> Shops	Retail sale of goods to the public – Shops, Post Offices, Travel Agencies and Ticket Agencies, Hairdressers, Funeral Director and Undertakers, Domestic Hire Shops, Dry Cleaners, Sandwich Bars – Sandwiches or other cold food purchased and consumed off the premises, Internet Cafes.	No permitted change
<b>A2</b> Financial and Professional Services	Financial Services – Banks, Building Societies and Bureau de Change. Professional Services (other than Health and Medical Services) – Estate Agents and Employment Agencies. Other Services – Betting Shops. Principally where services are provided to visiting members of the public.	A1 (where there is a ground floor display window)
<b>A3</b> Restaurants and Cafes	Restaurants and Cafes – Use for the sale of food for consumption on the premises. Excludes Internet Cafes (now A1)	A1 or A2
<b>A4</b> Drinking Establishments	Use as a Public House, Wine Bar or other Drinking Establishment	A1, A2 or A3
<b>A5</b> Hot Food Takeaway	Use for the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises	A1, A2 or A3
<b>B1</b> Business	(a) Offices other than in a use within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) (b) Research and Development – Laboratories, Studios (c) Light Industry	B8 (where no more than 235m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>B2</b> General Industry	General Industry (Other than Classified as in B1) The former 'Special Industrial' Use Classes, B3 – B7, are all now encompassed in the B2 Use Class	B1 or B8 (B8 limited to 235m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>B8</b> Storage or Distribution	Storage or Distribution Centres – Wholesale Warehouses, Distribution Centres and Repositories	B1 (where no more than 235m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>C1</b> Hotels	Hotels, Boarding Houses and Guest Houses. Development falls within this class if 'no significant element of care is provided'	No permitted change
<b>C2</b> Residential Institutions	Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Residential Education and Training Centres. Use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care.	No permitted change
<b>C3</b> Dwelling Houses	Dwellings for individuals, families or not more than six people living together as a single household. Not more than six people living together includes - students or young people sharing a dwelling and small group homes for disabled or handicapped people living together in the community.	No permitted change
<b>D1</b> Non-Residential Institutions	Medical and Health Services – Clinics and Health Centres, Crèche, Day Nursery, Day Centres and Consulting Rooms (not attached to the Consultants or Doctors house), Museums, Public Libraries, Art Galleries, Exhibition Halls, Non-residential Education and Training Centres, Places of Worship, Religious Instruction and Church Halls.	No permitted change
<b>D2</b> Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, Dance and Concert Halls, Sports Halls, Swimming Baths, Skating Rinks, Gymnasiums, Bingo Halls and Casinos. Other Indoor and Outdoor Sports and Leisure Uses, not involving motorised vehicle or firearms.	No permitted change
Not in any use class (Sui Generis)	For example: Retail Warehouse Clubs, Amusement Arcades, Launderettes, Petrol Filling Stations, Taxi Businesses, Car/Vehicle Hire Businesses and the Selling and Displaying of Motor Vehicles, Nightclubs, Theatres, Hostels, Builders Yards, Garden Centres.	No permitted change

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# French Drain

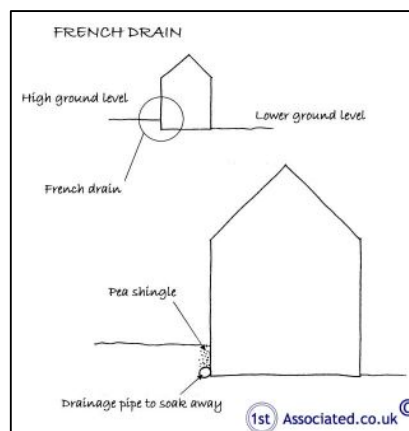
## Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem

We are finding where we are asked to look at damp walls and damp floors or damp problems in general that commonly it is because the external ground level is higher than the internal ground level, or airbricks have been blocked, or simply paving slabs, decking or briquettes have been used to form a patio area. This then discharges any rainwater against the building. Quite often the solution is to add a French drain.

Whilst French drains are quite simple and are basically nothing more than trenches filled with gravel, although there is a bit more to them, as we will explain, they are almost a D.I.Y. job for most people and they are relatively easy to install and are low cost. However, you do need some care and attention, otherwise you can install what we have heard referred to, as the French pond.

## What use is a French drain?

A French drain is a trench, the width of approximately six inches or 300 millimetres wide, or the width of your spade, and is approximately twice the depth, i.e. 12 inches or 300 millimetres. In most cases this will suffice, however, where there is a great deal of ground water you may wish to make the trench wider and deeper.



The French drain acts as an area where water soaks away quickly. We often recommend them close to building, but not next to the building, as this helps reduce the ground level and/or take any water that is directed at that area away. For example, where a patio has been put in place which aims any rainwater at part of the wall. As mentioned, whilst a French drain is a D.I.Y. job, it does need some understanding of how it works.

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### **French drains must be on a slope**

The piping that goes at the base of a French drain should be perforated or, as we did years ago for land drains, there should be gaps between each pipe. It should be set onto a bed of firm ground and the pipes should be on a fall to the drain. Whilst you should be able to ensure there is enough fall by sight, we also like the idea of rolling a marble from one end to the other.

You will then need to put the pipes down, fill the trench with half an inch, to an inch, of good sized gravel. You can leave it at that, or in addition you can cover with sand and then turf over. This is how a basic French drain is carried out.

### **The French drain system that we would recommend**

This would be as described, although we would add to the base an inch or two of gravel on to which the perforated drainage pipe will rest. It will then wrap around that drainage pipe filter fabric. This is to stop the holes in the perforated pipe from blocking up. By the way, the drainage pipe should be four to six inches/100 millimetres to 250 millimetres. We would then fill with gravel. In addition to this, we would add a silt trap and this is added in the run of the pipe and is very similar to a road gully (not that's of much use if you don't understand how a road gully works). The silt trap is a rectangular box with a pipe opening at each end. The drained water passes onto this and any particles sink to the bottom of the box and then the water travels on to the other side of the box, enabling you to feed into a drain.

These are usually made of glass reinforced polyester and have been available in this form since the mid-1980's. They are normally reinforced with a steel frame for additional strength and re-bedded in concrete.

### **The French pond!**

French drains will, over time, clog up, which is why we recommend using a filter fabric. However, even with this they will eventually clog up. Unfortunately, there is no dingo-rod equivalent, as it is normally fine sand, organic matter or clay that has clogged up the French drain. So, it is a case of digging it up and cleaning the pipework (or it may be quicker to just replace it), adding a filter fabric and re-filling the gravel.