

**BUILDING SURVEYORS REPORT**  
**IN RESPECT OF**  
**\*\*\*\*\***  
**BATTERSEA**  
**LONDON \*\*\*\*\***

**On behalf of**

**\*\*\*\*\***

---

**REF: PSM/SN**  
**DATE: \*\*\*\*\***

**MERLIN GORSE**  
**CHARTERED SURVEYORS**  
**\*\*\*\*\***  
**\*\*\*\*\***  
**LONDON SW15 6BA**

**TEL: 020 8780 5535**  
**E-mail: [surveyors@merlingorse.co.uk](mailto:surveyors@merlingorse.co.uk)**

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

In accordance with your instructions subsequently confirmed by our letter of \*\*\*\*\* , we have undertaken an inspection of the above property in order to report to you on its structural condition and state of repair. Our report is based on a visual examination of safely accessible parts of the building only. We cannot therefore accept liability for failing to report on any defect which is covered, hidden or inaccessible or which would only manifest itself from exposure works, testing or specialist examination.

This report is only for the use of yourself and your legal advisers. We cannot permit or accept liability for its use by a third party unless our written consent is given.

We will assume that no deleterious or hazardous materials or techniques have been used in the construction of the property. Lead water supply pipes and asbestos will be noted if these materials can be seen during our inspection. However, it must be appreciated that such materials are often only visible after opening up, which cannot be carried out at the risk of causing damage.

The report will not identify the existence of contamination or pollution in or from the ground as this can only be established by appropriate specialists. Furthermore, we shall not carry out any investigations into the past or present uses of either the property or any neighbouring land to establish whether there is any potential for contamination or pollution and for the purposes of this report will assume that none exists.

A visual inspection of the services installation will be undertaken where accessible although no tests will be applied. Where specialist tests are deemed advisable we will make appropriate recommendations.

We will assume that the property is not subject to any unusual or onerous restrictions or covenants which apply to the structure or affect the reasonable enjoyment of the property. We will assume that all by-laws, building regulations and other consents required have been obtained including those relating to alterations and extensions and will not verify whether such consents have been obtained. Enquiries should be made by your legal advisers. We will also assume that the property is unaffected by any matters which will be revealed by a local search and replies to the usual enquiries that neither the property nor its condition, its use or its intended use is or will be unlawful.

Our inspection was undertaken during the course of bright and sunny weather conditions. Average amounts of furniture made our examination of floor and wall surfaces difficult in areas. The property was unoccupied.

The building faces due north.

## **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

\*\*\*\*\* is a first and second floor flat contained within a three-storey, end-of-terraced converted Victorian building which is likely to have been constructed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The flat forms one of two in the building each sharing a communal entrance. We understand that a share of the freehold interest is purchased with the property.

Parking facilities along \*\*\*\*\* are restricted to permit holders and pay and display facilities. A large playground to Belleville Primary School is located just across the road in \*\*\*\*\*. Noise from children in the playground are clearly audible in the flat.

Marmion Road is located within Diamond Conservation Area which is designed to help conserve the architectural heritage of the locality.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

We have not undertaken check measurements in order to verify the accuracy of those contained within the vendors agent's particulars, although in summary, the property comprises the following:-

**First Floor:** Hall leading to sitting room, breakfast room/kitchen, rear bedroom No. 1 and bathroom.

*Stairs to;*

**Second Floor:** Front bedroom No. 2 and en-suite bathroom. Under-eaves storage space.

All habitable rooms enjoy natural daylight and ventilation.

### **CONSTRUCTION AND STATE OF REPAIR**

#### **EXTERNALLY – BUILDING AS A WHOLE**

##### **Main Roof**

The main roof has been converted into habitable accommodation and houses the top floor bedroom and bathroom to the subject property. This is of traditional timber framed construction and is covered with interlocking concrete tiles. Along raised brick parapet walls lead cappings are present as per good practice.

To the rear, a box dormer structure has been constructed as part of the roof conversion and the top of this is covered with sheet felt. The enclosing walls are covered with vertically-hung plain tiles. Overall the roof tiles appear in good condition. This covering is heavier than the original slates, however, no serious signs of deflection or sagging were noted.

A concrete tiled covering is also present over the roof to the three-storey back addition, all of which appears in quite good order.

Short of using a builder's ladder, we were unable to inspect the felt covering over the top of the dormer. Whilst no evidence of water ingress was noted, these surfaces

should be inspected and their condition verified. The ends of the felt have not been properly detailed strictly speaking in accordance with recognised practice although this is a minor criticism.

The tiles along the front are visible from skylight windows. These include metal-lined valley gutters which are located behind the roof over the front bay. Surfaces remain in reasonable condition. Lengths of lead cappings have pulled away slightly from the parapet walls and require re-dressing into the walls to prevent leaks occurring. Some of the mortar pointing along the edges of tiles next to a valley gutter are loose and should be repaired.

Plain concrete tiles are provided over the roof above the bay together with half-round ridge tiles, all of which appear in good order.

### Ancillary Roofs

There are two small roofs to the rear both of which are covered with interlocking concrete tiles. One of these is located over the first floor bay window and the other covers an old W.C enclosure. These appear in good order.

### **Rainwater Gutters and Downpipes**

These comprise of plastic gutters and downpipes which to the rear run into a downpipe contained within the back garden. This runs the full height of the building. Rainwater is drained by a short length of guttering above the kitchen window to the upper flat. This has been leaking and may overflow on occasions. We therefore suggest that an additional downpipe is introduced to separately drain the gutter to the back addition roof.

There are some stained joints to the front gutter which suggests that minor leaks have occurred. Rainwater is disposed of into a downpipe to the right side of the bay where it runs into the ground. The gutter requires clearing of debris.

### **Chimney Stacks and Parapet Walls**

Raised brick parapet walls extend above the main roof line and these are covered with a cement, sand rendered coating. Areas of the render work have cracked and are loose. These can be repaired when the lead cappings are attended to. Similar cracks are visible to a rear parapet wall. It is important that the condition of the render work is maintained as this is designed to help prevent downward rainwater penetration occurring. Today, similar parapet walls are capped with proper impermeable copings for this purpose.

Sheet felt to the rear dormer has been carried over an adjacent parapet wall for this purpose. This is not considered to be particularly good detail although it is likely to serve the test of time.

The principal chimney stack is located above the side of the building and this contains four flues, two serving 45B. This has developed a noticeable lean towards the property and we suggest that you consider having it taken down and re-built if you wish to use the flue, to, for example, the sitting room.

A further party stack over the back addition roof has been effectively cut in half and now only serves the neighbouring property. Some of the detailing formed when it was taken down is not as good as it could be.

### **External Joinery and Windows**

Overall, these appear in quite good condition.

Timber framed, sliding sashes are present within the sitting room. The lower sashes can be opened although the top ones have been painted-in and are stuck shut. They would benefit from new catches.

A modern double-glazed and Upvc sash window is present in the kitchen. This operates satisfactorily and is fitted with draught excluders.

A similar good quality window has been installed in the rear bedroom. This is openable via side hinges. A top hung casement is situated in the bathroom. The handle is loose.

There are two timber framed skylight windows in the top bedroom. These remain in good order and both of them are double-glazed. One of the glazed panels was misted up at the time of our inspection which indicates that the seal or vacuum has been 'lost'. This is a very common defect and the unit will need to be replaced. Some mould staining is visible as a result of condensation.

There is a small aluminium window in the en-suite shower room and this operates quite well.

### **Main Walls**

The main walls are of solid brick construction. We make the following observations and comments:-

The front elevation is faced with what is known as a 'Gault' brick which is good quality brick and weathers well. No serious structural defects were noted and the brickwork largely appears sound. There has been some minor movement to the front bay and a crack of 1mm wide is situated below the ground floor sill, one of which has snapped. There are some good quality and original tiles to the reveals of the entrance.

Both front and flank walls stand reasonably plumb. As the stack to the latter is leaning a corresponding panel is slightly uneven. The side wall has previously been painted all of which is peeling and needs redecorating. The brickwork as a whole appears in sound order.

There is a noticeable vertical mortar joint where the back addition meets the rear wall although no evidence of recent cracking is visible. There has been some historical movement to the side wall where some horizontal brick coursing is uneven.

A rear bay window is covered with a cement, sand render and is painted white. There is some old vegetation hanging out of a fascia at first floor level and a number

of cracks are visible none of which are considered to be indicative of serious movement. We suggest these are cut out and the repairs repaired by a competent bricklayer.

### **External Decorations**

The building as a whole would benefit from a programme of external redecorations.

### **Above and Below Ground Drainage**

The main above ground drain is run in plastic and this has been extended above the roof of the dormer when the attic was converted. This pipe is in good order although has developed a leak at first floor level.

No inspection chamber covers were visible in either the front or back gardens. Our inspection to the rear was undertaken with the use of a short ladder along the side boundary wall. It is possible that a chamber is presently hidden below a pile of foliage where a tree has been recently felled. It maybe necessary for the drains to be traced and a new chamber constructed to provide access for inspection and maintenance purposes.

The front garden is in a tidy condition. This is enclosed with rendered masonry walls together with modern wrought iron railings. Surfaces are covered with modern tiled slates. There is no fence between No's 43 and 45.

There are two gas meter enclosures in the garden together with a box which houses both electrical meters.

### **Foundations, Trees and Subsidence**

Building of this age and type often have shallow foundations and if built on shrinkable clay sub-soils will be subject to seasonal movement, rising in the wetter periods of Winter and Spring and falling in the drier periods of Summer and Autumn.

Excessive shrinkage of the sub-soil leads to subsidence and may cause structural damage to the building. This situation is made works by the presence of trees and shrubs which in periods of drought will extend their root growths in search of moisture removing further water from the ground and thus increasing the degree of sub-soil shrinkage. We must therefore emphasise that even though our inspection has shown that subsidence is not currently a problem with this property, continuing dry weather may still cause foundation failure particularly where the property is situated in the vicinity of trees or shrubs. It is therefore recommended that you ensure that you take out adequate insurance cover to provide protection against this potential risk.

### **Hardstandings and Boundary Walls**

The back garden falls within the demise of the lower flat and this is enclosed via brick boundary walls together with the side wall of an adjoining property. Surfaces within the back garden are largely covered with panels of concrete. A small tree has recently been felled.

The side boundary wall would benefit from some re-pointing repairs.

## **INTERNALLY – THE SUBJECT MAISONETTE**

### **Roof Spaces**

The main loft space has been converted. Access to a roof space over the back addition is gained via a ceiling hatch and ladder at the top of the stairwell. This is of traditional timber framed construction including sloping rafters and horizontal ceiling ties.

In accordance with good practice, roofer's underlay is visible below the tiles which acts as a secondary means of preventing wind-blown rain entering the roof space. Insulation quilt is visible between the ceiling ties to help prevent excessive heat losses during the winter months. At the end of the void, one can see where the chimney breast has been taken down. A vertical fracture around 4-5 mm wide is visible above the ceiling hatch. This appears quite short and is not considered to be serious. The underside of a modern concrete beam is visible over the head of the stairwell which is likely to have been constructed at the time of the loft extension.

Main roof timbers are visible in an under-eaves cupboard in the top floor bedroom. The original, timber ceiling ties are visible together with the top of a substantial steel beam. The latter spans between each party wall and confirms that the floor has been upgraded as part of the loft conversion. Interestingly, the new floor has been fitted below the line of the old ceiling which accounts for the slightly lower ceiling in the sitting room in our view.

Again, sheathing felt is visible below the tiles. 50mm thick boarded insulation is visible between the rafters and quilt insulation at floor level. We suggest that the short vertical wall along the front of this room is also insulated as this has been omitted.

Some white mould staining is visible to timbers below a metal lined gutter to the roof above. Damp meter readings taken were above normal. In our opinion, this is likely to be due to condensation rather than a leak. We therefore suggest this is monitored and loose mortar pointing to the edges of tiles adjacent is repaired in the event that this exacerbating the problem.

There are two roof vents visible along the front slope outside. These are designed to help ventilate a shallow void above the boarded insulation. Strictly speaking, the present number is below average.

### **Generally**

Ceiling and wall finishes are either painted and/or papered. The internal décor is considered to be quite good. You may wish to carry out a programme of redecoration works to suit your own requirements in due course, particularly as the removal of furniture, mirrors and the like can reveal decorations that have faded.

If you propose to use the fireplace, for example, within the sitting room for conventional purposes an inspection should be carried out by a specialist and a report obtained concerning the suitability of the flue(s) for this purpose.

You should be aware that the sound insulation properties of the floor structure separating the flat below are unlikely to accord with current regulations. No material

is visible in a hole to floorboards in a stair cupboard. This is very commonly encountered, however, it can prove to be a serious inconvenience if noisy neighbours are encountered. It is always a good idea to meet your co-lessees before you commit yourself to the purchase.

We have undertaken our inspection on a room-by-room basis as follows:-

### Sitting Room

Ceiling and wall surfaces appear in good condition overall. The ceiling includes a decorative cornice, planted mouldings and a fairly modern ceiling rose with a pendant lamp fitting. Some shrinkage cracks are present, particularly around the cornice all of which is commonly encountered within flats to period buildings.

The walls are a combination of solid masonry and lightweight partitions. These are lined and painted. Brush aluminium and 5-amp lamp sockets are present.

There is some staining below the right hand sash. The external sub-sill is uneven and does not effectively throw rainwater clear of the wall. In order to prevent rainwater percolating back into wall surfaces, a competent builder can renew the sill. Damp meter readings taken are presently normal however.

There are some useful bookshelves either side of the chimney breast together with fitted cupboards at low level.

A good quality fireplace surround (sadly painted) has been retained and this includes tiled inserts and a marble hearth. This houses an imitation coal fire which is connected to a gas supply pipe. An opening has been formed to the original load bearing partition. This contains French doors leading to the kitchen all of which appears in good order. Building regulation consent would have likely been required and consent details should be available to your solicitor.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is overlaid with a hardwood veneer covering. Surfaces appear even and sound underfoot.

### Hall

The stairs are of timber framed construction with painted balusters, handrails and newel posts. These appear reasonably even and sound underfoot.

Ceiling and wall surfaces remain in good order. There is a plastic rooflight at the head of the stairwell. Some mould staining is visible as a result of condensation. Internal partitions are largely of lightweight construction which are likely to be timber framed. An entry-phone handset is visible together with a smoke detector which is likely to be battery operated.

The entrance door to the flat is of solid construction with planted mouldings designed to imitate a panelled door. This includes separate Yale and mortice deadlocks together with intumescent and smoke seals around the frame.



### Kitchen/Breakfast Area

This remains in a good and presentable condition. The kitchen fittings consist of formica clad base and wall units together with an enamelled steel sink and a Bosch gas hob and electric oven. An extract hood is located above the hob and helps to filter cooking fumes. Good quality tiles are provided around the worktop. The cupboard doors appear to have been re-painted. Below the sink, hot and cold water feeds are run in modern copper together with a plastic waste trap. Water pressure is good. Hot water was running at the time of our inspection.

The ceiling houses modern, low voltage spot lamps which are activated by a dimmer switch. A chimney breast has been retained and the redundant flue is ventilated as per good practice.

There is some water staining above the kitchen window as a result of a leaking gutter. Repairs are discussed under "Rainwater Gutters and Downpipes" above.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is boarded and covered with slate effect tiles. Surfaces marginally slope down towards the rear. The tiles appear in good order.

In our opinion, the glass to the doors is unlikely to be of the toughened variety.

### Rear Bedroom

Doors to the majority of rooms are of the flush timber variety with planted mouldings. The lobby to this room includes useful wardrobe space. The soffit of this cupboard is slightly discoloured however damp meter readings are normal. This appears to be due to different paint colours rather than something more sinister.

Ceiling surfaces appear in good condition and these slope down towards the side wall. The partition separating this room and bathroom is of lightweight timber framed construction. The remaining walls are of solid construction which are lined and painted. Some of the decorations are quite 'thin' in areas.

Wall surfaces appear in good condition. Some lining paper is coming away from one of the corners although damp meter readings are normal.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is boarded and covered with fitted carpets. Surfaces marginally slope down towards the flank wall. Edges of the carpet were prised back exposing sheets of hardboard underlay and floorboards below.

### Bathroom

The fittings are modern and in good order. These include a small, Villeroy Bosch wash-hand basin, a W.C suite, an enamelled steel bath and a heated towel rail. Water pressure to the shower at the head of the bath is good. This maybe connected to a power pump which is possibly concealed behind the bath. You may wish to clarify this with the vendor. Waste water drains away from the bath rather

slowly which is a nuisance. We suggest this is looked at by a plumber. It may just be partially blocked.

Good quality tiles are provided to both walls and the floor.

### Top Floor Bedroom

The ceiling is boarded throughout together with a plasterboard coving. The flank wall has been dry-lined and the side of a chimney breast is visible behind plasterboard surfaces in a cupboard. Two fitted wardrobes provide useful storage space. Boarded surfaces are slightly punctured in one of these. There is some staining in a cupboard next to the bathroom although meter readings were normal.

A cupboard to the rear houses a washing machine together with various TV aerial cabling and a boiler.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is covered with a veneer strip covering. Surfaces appear even and sound underfoot.

### En-suite Shower Room

The rear window wall is of solid construction and the side walls are of timber framed construction. The fittings include a fully tiled walk-in shower, a W.C suite and a small basin. Floor surfaces are covered with a rustic tile. The shower is drained by a recessed gully. The shower operates well although an attachment is broken.

### **Dampness and Woodworm**

No extensive damp-related issues were noted.

There is some limited water staining above the kitchen window. A rainwater gutter outside needs attention and would benefit from the introduction of an additional downpipe to the rear.

We found no evidence of any 'live' woodworm infestation. Any previous woodworm treatments to floor and roof timbers should be ascertained by your solicitor. In the absence of any previous treatments, it is possible that some 'live' infestation will be occurring to concealed timbers which may require treating in due course.

### **SERVICES**

*N.B: Unless specifically requested we have not undertaken specialist tests of the services equipment. Our comments are based upon a visual inspection only.*

### **Gas Supply**

The incoming supply and meters are located in purpose built boxes in the front garden. These separately supply gas to both apartments.

### **Cold Water Supply**

The mains cold water supply pipe is located in the common stairwell. This is run in modern copper and a stopcock is visible behind a makeshift access panel. There should be separate mains supply pipes serving each of the flats rather than one pipe serving both. This is difficult to verify without gaining access to the lower flat.

### **Electrics**

Separate electricity meters are housed within an external cupboard along the front wall of the building. The cupboard needs upgrading.

A fuseboard is contained within a purpose built cupboard in the hall. These comprise of modern, miniature circuit breaking fuses. Where visible, cables are run in sheathed and insulated PVC.

Artificial light is provided by a combination of modern spot and pendant lamp fittings. Switched socket outlets are present within the principal rooms and many of these are of the brush aluminium variety. Their distribution is considered to be average only by today's standards. Fire proof covers or 'hats' should be fitted over recessed spot lamps in order to maintain the integrity of each ceiling for fire rating purposes. We are unable to verify that these have been fitted which is a common oversight by electricians.

It is recommended that electrical circuits to residential properties are inspected and tested out every ten years or so. Bearing in mind the property has been extended at some time in the past, an electrical certificate should be available from the vendor. This will confirm that the circuitry has been inspected by a qualified electrician and will set out any recommended repairs that are considered necessary. A copy of this report should be obtained.

### **Hot Water and Heating**

A gas-fired, Ideal combination boiler is situated in a cupboard in the top floor bedroom and this discharges exhaust fumes through the side wall via a balanced, steel flue. This provides hot water and heating throughout the property, the latter via pressed steel radiators located in the principal rooms. Where visible, pipes are run in modern copper. A Digistat heating thermostat is present in the hall although some of the radiators are fitted with thermostatically-controlled valves which allows their temperature to be varied.

In our opinion, this is not the best location for a boiler and in order to access and maintain it, the washing machine needs to be moved. This type of boiler was originally designed for use in single storey flats as it runs directly from the mains water supply. As it produces hot water on demand there is no need for a conventional hot water tank or cold water storage facility. It is quite feasible that the shower fittings are connected to a power pump. You may wish to clarify this with the vendor. The boiler is likely to be around twelve years old and therefore a replacement should be envisaged within the next five years or so.

Hot water was running at the time of our inspection although the heating equipment was not fired up. With a combination boiler, hot water is normally provided instantaneously. During our inspection, it took around five minutes to obtain hot water which is unusual. We suggest this is checked by a plumber.

A Gas Safe certificate and service records should be available from the vendor which will confirm that the boiler and associated equipment has been satisfactorily commissioned. An air brick should be introduced along the flank wall as a means of providing fresh air to the cupboard housing the boiler in our opinion.

### **MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE CHARGES**

We have not examined details of the subject lease and the following should be clarified by your solicitor:-

- a. Length of the unexpired term of the lease.
- b. Amount of service charges payable by the lessee of the upper flat. We understand that each lessee owns a share of the freehold interest. Your solicitor should establish if any sinking fund monies have been set aside for the purpose of financing the cost of say, refurbishing the common stairwell and external redecorations. In the event that no monies have been set aside, one-off payments will be required from each lessee in order to finance the cost of these works.
- c. Repairing and insuring responsibilities of the lessee to the subject flat.
- d. If a company of managing agents have been set up to maintain the external fabric of the building and the common parts.

The communal front door is of timber panelled construction and includes separate Yale and mortice deadlocks. This appears in sound condition. A fairly dated entry-phone intercom panel is present outside. There appears to have been a problem with the buzzer serving the upper flat.

The common parts are considered to be quite scruffy and include old carpets together with painted ceiling and wall surfaces which would benefit from redecoration.

### **PLANNING AND BUILDING REGULATIONS**

Planning and building regulation consents should be obtained by your solicitor for the previous loft conversion works. A completion certificate in relation to building regulations will confirm that the works were signed off by the local building control officer. A copy should be available.

### **CONCLUSION**

We found no major structural defect or condition that would lead us to advise against the proposed acquisition of a leasehold interest for \*\*\*\*\*, London SW. In our opinion, the property currently remains in a good and presentable condition overall and has been well maintained by the current owners.

Both kitchen and bathroom fittings are modern and in satisfactory condition.

An electrical test certificate should be obtained in relation to the electrical circuitry. You may wish to consider re-locating the boiler as it is presently situated in an under-eaves cupboard in the top floor bedroom which is not ideal.

There is a small leak over the head of the kitchen window which is coming from a rainwater gutter outside. This is not particularly severe.

The building would benefit from a programme of external redecorations. Sadly, the common parts have been neglected more recently and redecorations and new carpets are overdue. One-off payments will be required from each lessee on the basis that no monies have been set aside to finance the cost of these works. Enquiries should be made.

We have not attempted to assess the cost of putting right the defects and associated recommended repairs that are highlighted within the body of this report. Competitive builders' estimates should be obtained by you, prior to committing yourself to the purchase.

You should be aware that builders' costs vary widely depending on the levels of specifications required and their current workloads.

**Merlin Gorse Chartered Surveyors**

\*\*\*\*\*