

BUILDING SURVEYORS REPORT

ON

KENSINGTON

LONDON W8 6PR

On behalf of

REF: PSM/SN

DATE:

**MERLIN GORSE
CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

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INSTRUCTIONS

In accordance with your instructions subsequently confirmed by our letter of 6th ***** , 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 dull and overcast weather conditions. Average amounts of furniture made our examination of floor and wall surfaces difficult in areas.

The house was occupied at the time of our visit. The front of the property faces south.

SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION

***** is a four-storey, semi-detached, Victorian town house built we estimate in the 1860's.

The building is of traditional construction for its age comprising solid brick perimeter walls, suspended timber floors, timber framed windows and an inverted pitched roof over which is covered with slates.

The property is situated within Scarsdale & Abingdon Conservation Area which is designed to conserve the architectural heritage of the locality. We understand that it is not listed.

Parking facilities along ***** are largely restricted to permit holders only.

We briefly met ***** from the vendor's agents, Savills at the beginning of our visit. He indicated that the present owners have lived in the property for 16 years and back in 2009 commissioned fairly extensive refurbishment works which included lowering the back garden and the construction of a rear basement extension. Apparently, these works also included the removal of a number of internal partitions providing the open plan layout at lower ground and ground floor levels. We also understand that around two-thirds of the electrical wiring was renewed.

We briefly examined the planning website of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea. This shows a detailed list of drawings including various amendments submitted by the owners back in 2009. In our opinion, the property also appears to have been extended at second floor level to the rear. An extract from the planning records shows an application was approved back in 1962 for alterations and additions to the rear.

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 houses comprises the following:-

Lower Ground Floor:

Front door and lobby with access to an under-stairs cupboard, open plan layout including living area to front with a large breakfast island and kitchen and a dining area to the rear. Access to the back garden.

Stairs up to;

Ground Floor:

Open plan reception room, rear library area/office and access to a roof terrace.

Stairs to;

First Floor:

Master bedroom No. 1, dressing room and en-suite bathroom with separate dressing room to rear.

Stairs to;

Second Floor:

Rear bedroom No. 2, family bathroom, larger front bedroom No. 3 and bedroom No. 4.

All habitable rooms enjoy natural daylight and ventilation.

CONSTRUCTION AND STATE OF REPAIR**EXTERNALLY****Main Roof**

We were able to gain access to the main roof with the use of a surveyor's ladder and one of the skylight windows to the top floor.

The main roof is of timber framed construction and is covered with slates. This is known as a 'London' or 'inverted' roof which was commonly constructed in the mid-Victorian era. Two roof slopes span from the side walls down to a low level valley gutter and around raised parapet walls and lead cappings are visible. In our opinion the slates are relatively old and the roof as a whole has been the subject of a collection of piecemeal repairs and appears to be leaking in at least one location. Further repairs can be undertaken to extend its useful life. Alternatively, you may wish to have the roof stripped and renewed as a whole.

Our recommended repairs would include the replacement of cracked or otherwise defective slates. A noticeable number have been clipped into place which means that their original fixings have failed.

- Introduction of aluminium or zinc soakers (small pieces of metal placed between the edges of slates) and new lead cappings introduced. Unusually, no soakers have been introduced.
- The renewal of defective lengths of lead work which have been patched up with a roofers solution to help prevent leaks occurring.
- Some asphalt repairs are required to the valley gutter.

We understand that the separate roof voids below were effectively stripped away in 2009 and new sloping ceilings introduced together with four skylight windows. The latter are in good order.

Flat Roof Over Back Addition

This is a flat roof located to the rear of the main roof and is of timber framed construction. Surfaces have been covered with a high performance sheet felt which under normal circumstances can last in the region of 30 years. The felt overall appears in good order, however a noticeable leak is occurring to the rear and water staining is visible in the bedroom below. A repair is required next to the parapet wall. Where service pipes penetrate the felt associated collar details need renewing. An old asbestos cement cowl which appears to serve a flexible extract duct below can either be painted over or upgraded.

Perimeter lead cappings overlapping felt upstands are rather shallow although no serious signs of water ingress was noted as a result. Subject to these repairs the felt should last at least another ten years.

Roof Terrace over Extension

The waterproof membrane to this roof is largely covered with timber decking although edges of asphalt are visible around its perimeter and within two timber framed boxes which appear to be used as benches. Where visible, the asphalt appears in good order and includes lead cappings around its edges.

The roof is enclosed by glazed, balustrading and hardwood fence panels. A large piece of structural glass has been installed to the roof overlooking the kitchen. This is a specialist piece of glass which is around 25mm thick and is designed to support people standing on it. We suggest that a structural certificate is obtained from the vendor which would have been produced by the manufacturer's confirming its load-bearing capacity. There is a good quality neoprene strip around the edges of the glass although adjacent gaps next to the terrace plank flooring should in our view be sealed up.

Ancillary Roofs

There are two small roofs over the front and rear bay structures.

The rear bay is covered with asphalt and surfaces appear in good order.

The front bay is covered with sheet lead which is painted white. There is no gutter to this bay and water tends to run back towards the building wall which is not really the best arrangement. We found no serious evidence of water ingress along the front wall in the master bedroom although during the course of future redecoration works, you may wish to consider stripping this roof and laying it to more effective falls away from the building.

Rainwater Gutters and Downpipes

These are largely run in modern plastic. An internal rainwater downpipe to the flat roof at second floor level also collects rainwater from the main roof. The pipe is not visible inside the house and is likely to be contained within a vertical ducting to the rear.

A plastic gutter collects surface rainwater from the roof terrace and this is connected to a downpipe which runs below the garden decking.

Chimney Stacks and Parapet Walls

Raised brick parapet walls enclose the main roof and these are capped with both old stone copings stones and more modern concrete copings. The former appear in a dated condition although have stood the test of time. Frost damage has caused surfaces to spall and we suggest those worst affected are upgraded. Elsewhere the joints of the copings can be raked out and pointed up. Similar copings are present to the walls surrounding the rear flat roof.

There are two chimney stacks situated above the side wall of the house and these each contain four flues. Both stand reasonably plumb although the structure to the rear has developed a very slight lean away from the roof.

There is some cracked and loose cement, sand render which needs cutting back and renewing. At this time, the stability of the pots should be checked. There also appears to have been a third stack located along the party wall shared with No. 8 although this has been lowered in and capped off with concrete copings. None of the flues are presently used for their original purposes. Similarly, the internal faces of the parapet walls are also covered with panels of cement, sand render which are discoloured.

External Joinery and Windows

The windows along the front are largely of the timber framed and sliding sash variety. Elsewhere, timber framed casements have been fitted.

A collection of both window types have been fitted with slim double-glazed units although we did come across some single-glazed panels, for example, in the master bedroom. The latter have been fitted with inexpensive secondary glazing panels inside, no doubt in an attempt to reduce noise nuisance from passing traffic. Similar panels and have been fitted at second floor level. Overall, the windows remain in a serviceable but well used condition. The window in the first floor bathroom has been screened off with marble cladding.

The main entrance door is of timber panelled construction and is in good order. This contains three Banham locks and brush steel ironmongery. The only criticism we have is that gaps of up to 10mm wide are visible to its leading edge where the opening has been distorted due to historical movement although a competent carpenter will be able to remove the door and deal with this together with the fitting of draught-proofing brushes.

At basement level, there is a fully glazed door along the front. Windows at this level have been fitted with intruder grilles for security purposes. You may wish to consider installing something similar to the door opening outside.

The sliding doors leading to the back garden are of aluminium framed construction and covered with a factory made polyester powder coating. These are of good quality and operated satisfactorily during our visit. The doors are supported on a recessed track system which at low level finishes flush with external timber decking surfaces. We have come across problems associated with wind-driven rain seeping across the width of similar sliding door thresholds although we found no associated issues with those inspected. The threshold or bottom of the door frame includes self-draining slots which should be kept clear to drain away rainwater. Interestingly, there only appears to be one lock.

Separate pairs of French doors at ground floor level contain double-glazed units. A number of fixed glazed panels adjacent have misted up as their seals have been 'lost'. These can easily be replaced.

Single glazed sliding sashes have been retained in the master bedroom. These can still be re-used although two panes of glass have cracked and old window locks need upgrading in our opinion. A number of the upper sashes have been painted-in and are effectively stuck shut. If you wish to bring these back into operation they will need to be overhauled by a specialist. One of the sills to the rear is rotten.

Casement windows to the top floor are single glazed only and most of these have been fitted with secondary glazing which prevents them from being operated easily. You may wish to consider upgrading these.

Two concrete sub-sills along the side of the building have dropped out of position and we suggest these are cut out and renewed. The exact cause of this is unknown although no serious signs of structural movement were noted in this area.

Main Walls

The main walls are of solid brick 215 and 325mm thick construction. Along the front, the walls are covered with a plain render which is painted white and incorporate architectural features typical of a town house built in the mid-Victorian era. These include heavy cornice work at each floor level, a Juliet balcony with wrought iron balusters and curved window and door arches. London Stock facing bricks are present to the rear. The walls to the new extension appear to be of modern cavity construction. We make the following observations and comments:-

Front Elevation

The front façade has been well maintained in our opinion and no serious structural defects were noted.

In common with many period properties, there is evidence of historical movement. The front entrance is distorted and the entrance steps themselves have dropped towards the neighbouring property. Furthermore, window sub-sills at second floor level are uneven and cracks to cornice detailing over the first floor windows are visible. This is due to settlement of the concealed brick arches behind the panels of render. During the course of future redecoration works, we recommend that previously filled cracks over the head of the first-floor windows are cut back and any necessary brick repairs undertaken. The wall as a whole stands plumb.

Side Elevation

This wall also stands reasonably plumb and no major concerns were noted.

A 2mm wide vertical fracture is visible to both chimney breasts although these are not of serious concern. There are two modern plastic pipes which serve as flues to the hot water and heating boiler. Adjacent to these is an older square metal casing which appears to be some form of extract grille.

Rear Elevation

Edges of a visible damp-proof course are visible at low level to the walls enclosing the modern extension.

According to drawing details viewed on the planning website, the original bay structure continued down to ground level and a flight of steps led up to a rear garden door. This has of course all now been removed to make way for the new extension.

The brickwork pointing appears sound.

External Decorations

The paintwork to masonry surfaces appears in good order although a collection of windows require re-painting.

Above and Below Ground Drainage

In our opinion, there are at least three vertical soil pipes, two of which are contained within vertical ducts concealed inside the house and the third is located along the flank wall which is run in modern plastic. This serves fittings at second floor level. We also came across a 100mm diameter plastic pipe located adjacent to the hot water tank in a kitchen cupboard. A third pipe is likely to be located next to a redundant chimney breast to the rear of the house. The top of this pipe is visible at main roof level. These will serve foul and waste pipe connections to each of the bathrooms and cloakroom. We are unable to verify the route taken by waste pipes serving the kitchen as these are all hidden from view.

The main underground drains run parallel to the side of the property where two inspection chambers have been constructed. The cover to one of these was raised and exposes a deep chamber with a main 150mm diameter glazed earthenware drain running towards *****. The chamber appears to contain an intercepting connection which is designed to allow the connection of a drain to the main sewer or larger drainage pipe. Water was running away freely during our inspection and no defects were noted.

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 worse 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, prolonged periods of 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 front and rear gardens are well maintained. We understand that ground levels in the back garden were lowered back in 2009. Surfaces are now entirely covered with hardwood plank decking which is surrounded by high boundary walls providing a comfortable and private area. A number of shrubs project through the decking and below this, there appears to be a void of between 200-300mm deep. Timber joists or wall plates are visible below the decking as a form of support. A number of spot lamps have been built in around the perimeter of the garden together with a simple sprinkler system for watering shrubs. Perimeter masonry walls remain in a good but stained condition. There does not appear to be any conventional form of drainage to the decking although various holes provided for shrubs are likely to serve this purpose at present. Any surface water gullies present below the decking are hidden from view. It would therefore be a good idea to make enquiries with the vendors in order to ascertain if any provision for draining surface rainwater was carried out when the garden was lowered. Ideally, gullies should have been installed and connected to the main drains.

The path along the side of the building is covered with paving slabs and ground levels are at least 1m above floor levels. This will tend to encourage the bridging of moisture across and through the thickness of the side wall. However, as far as we could tell, there are no extensive signs of penetrating dampness in corresponding locations at lower ground floor level. A high timber gate has been fitted. Wet rot has occurred to its leading edges.

Parking space for a small car is provided along the front of the house and surfaces are covered with concrete slabs and stone flags leading up to the main entrance. Boundary walls are covered with a plain render coating which is painted white. The entrance steps are not original and consist of good quality re-constituted stone. These are not entirely waterproof and evidence of moisture staining has occurred to surfaces in the cupboard below. In order to prevent this, it will be necessary to lay an impermeable covering, for example, mastic asphalt, over the steps. Our similar comments apply to the steps leading down to the front door at basement level. Rainwater here, is drained by a single water gully. This also collects waste water from a small Butlers sink located in a cupboard below the entrance steps.

INTERNALLY

Roof Voids

Originally, there would have been two shallow attic spaces above the main body of the building. These have been stripped away and ceiling surfaces follow the contour of the inverted roof over. This type of roof structure has a tendency to impose an eccentric load on the side walls of semi-detached properties. There is a very slight lean to part of the parapet wall and one of the stacks at high level. This is not considered to be severe, however as a precaution we suggest its stability is checked during our recommended roof repairs. If you choose to replace the slates to the main roof, it will provide you with an opportunity to ensure that adequate insulation has been introduced.

Generally

The internal décor is considered to be good and ceiling and wall surfaces are either painted or covered with patterned wallpaper. You may wish to carry out a programme of redecoration works to suit your own requirements in due course. Inevitably, when paintings and the like are removed when occupants move out, the fading of decorations is often noticeable.

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

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

Lower Ground Floor

Open Plan Dining Room, Breakfast Area and Kitchen

We have briefly examined an existing basement plan prepared prior to the alterations undertaken in 2009. This shows two partitions sub-dividing the floor area with a kitchen located in the centre. These walls have since been stripped away and a collection of downstand beams are visible at ceiling level which will contain structural beams supporting parts of the building above. We found no evidence of any serious signs of deflection, however, short of undertaking damaging exposure works we are unable to verify the suitability or size of these beams. Building Regulation consent would have been required for these alterations and details should be obtained by your solicitor.

The ceilings appear to be of boarded construction and contain modern low-voltage and recessed spot lamp fittings. Surfaces remain in good order. Walls are painted in neutral colours throughout and rows of good quality, fitted cupboards and kitchen units are located either side of a sizeable breakfast island.

Full height bookcases have been fitted to the front and rear. Where visible, wall surfaces appear in good order. Some pitting of decorations is visible to the flank wall along the front and this appears to be due to limited moisture ingress. We suggest that external cracks in this location are cut out and repaired and the damaged plasterwork cut back and renewed with a waterproof plaster coating.

The floor is of solid construction throughout and is covered with a hardwood parquet finish which is likely to be laid on boards and timber battens. Surfaces appear even and sound underfoot. Within one of the cupboards, concrete screed surfaces are visible. Damp meter readings taken to concrete surfaces were normal.

Good quality, modern kitchen units have been installed. These include formica-clad base and wall units which run from floor to ceiling height either side of a large breakfast island. The latter houses an electric hob and stainless steel sink set within a thick granite worktop. There is also a built-in Siemens washing machine and Miele drier. Water pressure to the sink mixer is considered to be average. The wall cupboards house a Gaggenau electric oven, microwave and a fridge and freezer.

There is a stainless steel extract hood suspended over the breakfast island although whether this is ducted to an external air vent is unknown.

There is limited evidence of rising damp damage to low-level wall surfaces in the front entrance lobby and further damp staining is visible in the under stairs cupboard adjacent. Damp related problems are often encountered in these locations as the original masonry walls have not been constructed with effective damp-proof courses. This cupboard has been tanked or damp-proofed with a hard cement, sand render although this exercise has not been entirely successful. In our experience, any associated damp-proofing guarantees are likely to be of little use to a prospective purchaser.

The extent and nature of any previous damp-proofing works undertaken at basement level should be obtained by your solicitor. We will be happy to comment upon these if they are to hand. Specialist repairs can be undertaken to eliminate the damp areas, for example, in the under stairs cupboard if required.

Ground Floor

The ground floor has been opened up and includes an attractive 'library' area to the rear. There is also an unusual plate glass divider or partition running away from the entrance door.

There are at least two beam downstands at ceiling level, all of which appear in good order. What would have been designed as fire-rated partitions enclosing the stairwell have since been removed. Their removal can be criticised by local building control officers, however, in our experience such matters are rarely enforced by the authorities.

Wall surfaces are plastered and painted and below dado level embossed paper is present. Most of the radiators are housed within purpose built timber boxes or casings and miniature radiators are visible below the front windows. A good quality marble fireplace surround and hearth has been retained for aesthetic purposes only and an old gas supply pipe has been capped off. The brick reveals to the fireplace have been faced with some form of slate effect panelling. Ideally, a vent should be introduced to the disused flue to the rear where a previous fireplace has been stripped away. This is designed to help ventilate the redundant flue.

Small patches of rainwater staining were noted to the reveals of the rear French doors and decorations are slightly spoiled. Re-sealant repairs are required outside.

A small plastic panel was removed to a vertical duct next to the library area and some telecom and what appear to be TV aerial cables are visible.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is covered with a parquet block flooring together with loosely laid carpets over. In common with many period properties, floor surfaces tend to shudder when heavily trafficked.

First Floor

This contains the master bedroom together with two dressing rooms and an en-suite bath/shower room.

Master Bedroom No. 1

The ceiling contains a number of low voltage modern spot lamps. Surfaces appear in a good and even condition. Simple timber framed book shelves are present together with a row of fitted wardrobes. Some of these contain some office equipment used by the present owners and the remaining cupboards were full of clothes.

Hairline cracks were noted above the door and 1mm wide cracks below the windows. These are not considered to be serious defects. A shallow and continuous radiator housing is present below the windows.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is boarded and covered with fitted carpets. Surfaces marginally sag across the width of the floor although no undue signs of deflection or sagging were noted. Sagging timber floors to period houses is commonly encountered.

Dressing Rooms and En-Suite Bathroom

Floor to ceiling height wardrobes and cupboard space have been fitted either side of a comfortable dressing room area which leads to the bathroom. These all include mirrors fitted to their doors. A chimney breast has been retained behind cupboards along the flank wall.

Hardwood parquet flooring has been fitted throughout and rugs laid over.

The bathroom contains good quality fittings which include a fully-glazed, walk-in shower surrounded by marble panels and a tray, a vanity unit, an enamelled steel bath and a vitreous china W.C suite. There is also a built-in television and heated towel rail. All of the fittings operated satisfactorily during our inspection.

A row of fitted wardrobes and shoe shelves are present in a connecting men's dressing room together with a small radiator. Some lightweight sliding doors are faced with heavy mirrors and you may wish to consider upgrading these, as they tend to flap about when operated.

All of the fittings are connected to concealed power pumps.

Stairwell

The stairs are of timber framed construction incorporating timber balusters, handrails and newel posts. These all appear sound underfoot although some of the landings tend to slope away from the party wall which is quite common. The handrail at the bottom of the kitchen steps can be wobbled by hand and the balusters need tightening up.

A small cloakroom is present to a half-landing between ground and basement levels. Surfaces are unusually covered with ornate mirrors. A Burlington W.C suite and wash-hand basin operate satisfactorily.

One or two smoke detectors are visible together with a cupboard at the head of the stairs which contains some cold water storage tanks.

Doors to the majority of the rooms are of the timber panelled variety with chromium plated ironmongery. These appear in good order.

Second Floor

There are three double bedrooms at this level together with a bathroom. One of the bedrooms along the front can only be accessed via either the bathroom or bedroom adjacent which is considered a design fault. We have copied the names of each room from the vendor's agents particulars.

Front Bedroom No. 3

There is some staining visible to ceiling surfaces as a result of a roof leak. Elsewhere, they appear in good order. A built-in desk has been fitted and this includes a radiator below. Inexpensive sliding doors separate bedroom No 4 adjacent.

The floor is of suspended timber construction which is boarded and covered with fitted carpets. Surfaces marginally slope down towards the centre of the building.

Bedroom No. 4

This matches the layout of bedroom No. 3 with cupboards present either side of the stairwell door. No serious defects were noted.

Bathroom

The central valley gutter to the roof above follows the line of the door partition and ceiling surfaces slope down from the flank wall. These appear in good order.

The partitions are of lightweight timber-framed construction which are plastered and painted. Panels around the bath and basin are run in marble. A glazed shower enclosure and W.C suite located adjacent. The fittings are considered to be a little dated although perfectly serviceable. The W.C pan does not flush properly.

Floor surfaces are covered with matching marble panels.

Rear Bedroom No. 2

A flat roof over this room has developed a leak along the end wall and some noticeable water staining is visible to ceiling surfaces. We also noted some minor water staining to the bottom corners of the main window.

Elsewhere, surfaces appear in reasonable condition.

Dampness

Damp meter readings were taken using the pins of a battery-operated moisture meter around the lower ground floor and our comments are as follows:-

We should point out that we were unable to take meter readings through hard surfaces, for example, wall tiles and behind kitchen units and fitted cupboards, and walls that have been dry-lined. We have also made some damp-related comments under the respective room headings noted above.

No extensive damp related problems were noted and the majority of readings taken were normal.

There is evidence of penetrating dampness to the side wall of the front sitting room. Elsewhere, a small number of higher than normal meter readings represent pockets of rising damp although these have not damaged decorations. There is also some evidence of rising and penetrating damp to the front entrance lobby and under stairs cupboard.

We will be happy to comment upon any damp-proofing works that have been undertaken by the present owners. This is particularly important in our view, as the walls at basement level are covered with rows of fitted units which means that the condition of plastered surfaces behind cannot be verified. External ground levels along the side wall are at least one metre above floor surfaces which will tend to encourage lateral moisture penetration. No serious damage was noted to visible wall surfaces.

We found no evidence of any 'live' woodworm infestation. Almost all floor timbers are concealed. It is therefore important that your solicitor obtains details of any previous woodworm treatments to say, floor and roof timbers. With a property of this age, previous infestations will almost certainly have occurred and it therefore follows that in the absence of any previous treatments, some 'live' infestation may be occurring to timbers which are presently concealed and 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 main and gas meter are situated in the lobby cupboard at basement level.

Cold Water Supply

The mains cold water supply pipe is situated opposite the gas meter. This is run in 15mm diameter modern copper piping. There are at least two cold water storage tanks to the top floor. There should also be a smaller feed and expansion tank which is designed to top up water circulating in the heating system. This is likely to be

located in the same cupboard. The tanks are of modern plastic construction and adequately insulated. As were unable to inspect these at close quarters the adequacy of their structural supports cannot be verified. In our opinion, the mains water pipe is a little under-sized although as water to most fittings is pumped, this is not considered to be a problem.

Electrics

The principal incoming main and associated switchgear is contained within a high level cupboard at basement level. Two conventional meters are visible together with a row of modern, miniature circuit breaking fuses. A junction box serving intruder alarm equipment is also visible. A further row of modern fuses is visible in a stairway cupboard and fairly new cabling can be seen. We would not normally expect to find two electrical meters and this suggests that the circuitry has been split into two. It is possible that the circuitry serving the basement was separated from the remainder of the building at some time in the past when, for example, a housekeeper's flat may have existed. You may wish to regularise this matter although the advice of an electrical engineer would need to be obtained.

According to the owner, two thirds of the circuitry was upgraded six years ago. Where visible, cables are run in sheathed and insulated PVC.

Artificial light is provided by a combination of modern, low-voltage recessed spot and pendant lamp fittings. There are also some 5-amp round pin sockets for table lamps. Electrical socket plates are largely run in brush steel and their distribution is considered to be adequate by today's standards.

Spot lamps should normally be fitted with plasterboard hats or covers in floor voids in order to maintain the fire integrity of each ceiling although we are unable to verify that these are present. This is a very common oversight by electricians.

An electrical test certificate should be available from the vendor. This will confirm that the circuitry as a whole has been inspected and tested out by a qualified electrician (including the new circuitry when fitted). This should verify that there are no significant shortcomings in the condition of concealed wiring, provision of earth bonding and the like. In the absence of one provided by the vendors, an electrician should be commissioned by you for this purpose and a written report sent to you with their findings.

Some intruder alarm movement detectors are visible in the stairwell and two ADT key pads have been fitted together with a junction box. This equipment has not been tested out. Service records should be available.

Hot Water and Heating

A hot water and heating boiler and is hidden behind a row of kitchen units along the flank wall. This has been fitted in such a way that makes inspections for maintenance purposes difficult. The housekeeper managed to remove some stored items which exposed part of the boiler during our visit.

The boiler discharges exhaust fumes through the side wall of the building via two modern plastic flue pipes which are visible outside. This type of flue is commonly used with what is known as a Keston boiler. At floor level, there is a condensing pump which is designed to pump condensed water from the boiler up and onto the path outside. A large hot water storage tank is situated in a cupboard opposite the boiler and together these provide hot water and heating throughout the property, the latter via modern pressed steel radiators contained in the principal rooms. The system that has been installed is known as an indirect system whereby the means of providing hot water and heating facilities are separate. This incorporates at least two cold water storage tanks. In order to maintain satisfactory water pressure to the various fittings hot and cold water is pumped to tap outlets. These pumps are concealed and could not be found during our inspection. Where visible, pipes are run in modern copper and hot water was running during our inspection. The heating equipment was also running and a warm ambient temperature was obtained in the house. At basement level in particular, it became very warm and we asked the housekeeper if she was aware of any under floor heating that had been installed. Apparently there is none.

The majority of modern pressed steel radiators are housed within purpose made timber casings. Many of these have been fitted with thermostatically-controlled valves which allows for localised temperature control. A room thermostat has been fitted and the a hot water and heating programmer is situated next to the boiler. The hot water tank appears to possess an immersion heater facility in the event of a gas supply failure.

The equipment is modern and the boiler appears to be between 7-10 years old. Regular service records should be obtained together with a Gas Safe certificate. The latter will confirm that the equipment has been fitted in accordance with current regulations and was satisfactorily commissioned when the boiler was installed.

Specialist Equipment

We are bound to point out that various specialist equipment is contained with the property. This includes a number of smoke detectors, TV aerial equipment, washing machines, cookers and garden watering equipment. The testing of this equipment is considered to be beyond the remit of our survey. If considered necessary, the vendor or their representative should demonstrate to you the satisfactory operation of these fittings.

PLANNING AND BUILDING REGULATIONS

Planning and building regulation consents should be available for the present layout of the property including the kitchen extension and alterations to various load bearing partitions. Alterations to the rear façade appear to have been undertaken in the distant past. No outstanding conditions should exist in relation to these consents. We noted on the planning website that consent was withheld for the use of the flat roof garden extension as a roof terrace and a previous application for the use of the front garden to park a car was declined. These details should be verified by your solicitor. Completion certificates should also be available in relation to building regulations.

CONCLUSION

We found no major structural defect or condition that would lead us to advise against the proposed acquisition of the freehold interest for *****, Kensington, London W8. The property is considered to be in very good condition overall and has been well maintained by the present owners in our opinion. An extension and internal alterations undertaken by the owners in 2009 have further improved the accommodation in our view.

The kitchen fittings are of good quality and relatively new and modern bathroom fittings are present throughout. The hot water and heating equipment also appears to be reasonably modern and was operating satisfactorily during our inspection.

It is important that you obtain an electrical test certificate in relation to the circuitry as we understand that the most of the wiring and associated fittings were upgraded in 2009. This should be available from the vendor and will confirm that the wiring and fittings have been satisfactorily tested out by a qualified electrician.

There are at least two roof leaks visible to the top floor and the main slated covering remains in a tired condition. It can however be repaired by a competent roofer. Alternatively, you may wish to upgrade it.

We will be happy to comment upon details of any previous damp-proofing works undertaken, if they are to hand. No extensive signs of dampness were noted at basement level.

The windows are a collection of both single and double-glazed units. In our opinion, the property would benefit from some replacements.

We have not attempted to assess the cost of the principle defects and repairs highlighted within the body of this report. Competitive builders' estimates should be obtained prior to committing yourself to the purchase. Builders' costs can vary widely depending on the levels of specification required and their current workloads.

Merlin Gorse Chartered Surveyors
