

MAIN ELEMENTS SURVEY REPORT

for

**100 SMITH AVENUE
NEW TOWN
NE3 6GH**

on behalf of

MR A JONES

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Client

Mr A Jones

1.2 Subject Property

100 Smith Avenue, New Town, NE3 6GH.

1.3 Property Surveyed by

Alan Potter MRICS.

1.4 Date of Survey

14th June 2013.

1.5 Weather Conditions

Dry and fine, with an ambient air temperature of around 17°C.

1.6 Tenure

The property is understood to be of Freehold Tenure.

1.7 Roads

Local authority maintained roads and footpaths.

1.8 Instructions

In accordance with the instruction received from Mr Jones, I have carried out a Main Elements Survey of the subject property, primarily to determine the general condition of the property concentrating on matters of significance, with associated potential financial implications. This report is not intended to be a specification of every minor defect which might exist or be discovered in the future.

1.9 Limitations

This report is for the use of the party to whom it is addressed and should be used within the context of the instruction under which it is prepared and which is set out in item 1.8. It may be disclosed to other professional advisors in respect of this purpose. No responsibility is accepted to any third party for the whole or part of its contents.

No opening up works have been carried out to expose foundations and it is, therefore, not possible to comment on their form of construction or condition.

No investigations have been carried out to determine whether or not high alumina cement concrete, calcium chloride additive, asbestos or any other deleterious materials have been used in the construction of the building and therefore no assurance can be given as to the presence of such.

I would point out that a Surveyor cannot cause damage to someone else's property and therefore, I have not inspected any part of the structure which is covered, unexposed or inaccessible and I am therefore unable to report that any such part of the property is free from rot, beetle or other defects.

No tests were carried out on the drainage, electrical or mechanical systems.

A mining search has not been specifically made through British Coal. This is a region with which mining activity is generally associated and I would therefore recommend that Legal Advisers acting for a potential purchaser arrange for a mining report.

The property incorporated fitted floor coverings and household furnishings, all of which restricted the extent of the inspection somewhat and my comments are therefore limited accordingly.

1.10 Location/Amenities

The property is within an established residential location and is afforded the usual restricted range of localised services/amenities with reasonable public/private transport links to Sunderland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and other parts of the region.

Where referred to, the terms "left" and "right" are taken from a point externally when facing the respective elevation under consideration from outside, with the front elevation deemed to be that facing onto Smith Avenue, in a north westerly direction.

1.11 Brief Description of the Property

The property comprises a three bedroom semi-detached Dutch Bungalow of traditional construction, with cavity external walls under a pitched tiled roof; believed to have been built circa 1935.

The ground and first floors of the property are generally of suspended timber construction; but with a limited area to the rear of the kitchen being of solid concrete.

The property is located on a moderately sloping site, with a gradient running down toward the rear.

1.12 Access and Parking

Off-road vehicle parking is provided by way of a single garage and drive.

1.13 Accommodation

Ground Floor	Entrance porch, hall, living room, dining room, bedroom, kitchen and shower room/WC.
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First Floor Landing, bedroom 2 and bedroom 3.

External Gardens to the front, side and rear.

1.14 Planning and Legislation

No enquiries have been made as to the Planning Status of the property.

2.0 MAIN ELEMENTS SURVEY REPORT

2.1 MOVEMENT

Vertical cracking of wall plaster was noted to the side wall within the kitchen, being around 1mm in width and which generally corresponded with the brickwork return/corner externally. Horizontal cracking of wall plaster was noted to the rear wall of the adjacent dining room, of around ½mm in width, adjacent to the ceiling cornice; and with hairline cracking noted horizontally at the ceiling cornice/wall junction within the kitchen.

Inspection of the kitchen indicated the vertical cracking as generally corresponding with the line of the dropped ceiling, opposite a vertical step in the side facing external wall and at the point where the floor construction changes from suspended timber to solid concrete.

Discussion with the client ensued and it was agreed that the property was likely to have previously incorporated an outhouse to the rear and which would explain the variations in construction in this area. In addition, a pantry is understood to have previously been removed from the area immediately adjacent to the vertical cracking; with indentation to the ceiling and a built-up window opening supporting this.

Cracking is inherently prone to occur to buildings at changes in level, direction or construction characteristics, due to the natural movement of materials at planes of weakness.

In addition, in properties of this age and style it is fairly commonplace for the foundations to offshoots and bays to be at a higher level than those to the house, and to also be of less substantial construction. Consequently, such foundations may be more vulnerable to the shrinkage of the subsoil at that level. In such instances the offshoot/bay rotates away from the house, leaving a vertical crack of varying thickness at its junction with house walls.

Whilst no corresponding cracking was noted to brickwork externally, vertical cracking to wall plaster was noted as being wider to its upper section, indicating a degree of rotation as occurring and which is considered the most likely source of the cracking evident to the kitchen and adjacent areas; exacerbated by the variation in construction characteristics noted above.

In this regard, cracking within the kitchen is understood to be long-standing, having been filled/repared on several occasions and consequently is not of concern. Guidance published by the Building Research Establishment categorises cracking of less than 2mm as “very slight” and which may be appropriately filled. Such filled cracks are prone to recur, as noted, and the need to periodically repair should be anticipated.

External inspection indicated cracking of brickwork to the front facing bay, at its junction with the main external walls and which has previously been re-pointed. This is a likely consequence of variations in foundation depth and construction between the bay and the main house, as noted above and which is not of concern.

A degree of horizontal misalignment of facing brickwork was noted to the gable wall, at a point located approximately between the drainage inspection chamber cover and the brick buttress; and with low level stepped cracking in this location having been re-pointed. However, no evidence of on-going structural movement was noted and this is not of concern.

Isolated displacement of brick-on-end details over the side facing window openings was noted and it is considered feasible that lintels may not have originally been installed; with replacement PVCu framed windows now provided in lieu of the original timber. Whilst not of immediate concern, these elements should be monitored to ensure that movement is non-progressive.

No further signs were found of significant present movement in the building.

2.2 TIMBER DEFECTS

No signs were found of significant wet or dry rot in structural and main joinery timbers.

Evidence of wood-boring insects was noted to the timber door lining serving the ground floor under-stair cupboard. However, this issue would appear to have been previously treated and nothing was noted suggesting this infestation as being on-going.

2.3 DAMPNESS

All accessible internal and external walls were tested internally with the use of a "Protim Mini" electronic moisture meter at intervals of approximately 500mm.

No indication of significant penetrating or rising damp was found.

However, extensive dampness was noted as affecting the internal wall to the ground floor shower room, to the hall side, extending between the shower room door and the below stair cupboard door and up to 1500mm above floor level. Dampness noted corresponded with the location of the shower enclosure and leakage occurring over time around this element is considered the likely source, by for example, voids to the wall tiling or the seal around the shower tray.

It is therefore recommended that having ensured that the shower enclosure is sound and watertight, the damp affected wall plaster be hacked off and 3:1 sand/cement render wall finish applied, and which may be finished with a skim coat of Thistle Multi-Finish plaster.

A minor degree of dampness was noted to wall plaster within the front facing bay at low level. Given the age and construction characteristics of the property, the bay is likely to be constructed in "solid" brickwork, and which is reliant upon the integrity of the mortar pointing to remain watertight. In addition, cold-bridging and associated condensation can occur in such locations and it is recommended that care be taken to ensure that mortar pointing remains in sound condition and that the internal area is kept heated and ventilated. Given the limited extent of moisture noted, further remedial works are not considered necessary in this location.

2.4 EXTERIOR

2.4.1 Roofs

Roof coverings were checked from ground level with the aid of binoculars and with the use of a 3.000m ladder.

The roof is of dual pitched and hipped design, with a clay plain tiled covering and a ridge line running parallel to the front elevation.

It is generally considered that a clay tile of this specification can last for around 70 years, depending on the quality of the tile and associated workmanship.

Minor dishing/misalignment noted to the main roof slopes is generally considered to be commensurate with age and type, unlikely to be progressive and not of concern.

A degree of misalignment was also evident to the main ridge line. However, this is also considered historic and unlikely to be progressive.

An area of replaced tiling was noted to the side facing hip, in general proximity to the drainage soil stack and where it is understood that a chimney stack was previously removed. Although in functional condition, tiling was misaligned with the adjacent surfaces, increasing the potential for the ingress of wind driven rain between tiles and whilst not of immediate concern, you may wish to ensure that at the time of future roofing works, tiling in this location is installed flush with the surrounding materials.

A relatively high number of broken, displaced and frost damaged tiles were evident and isolated patch replacement of tiling has been undertaken.

Deteriorated tiles were especially evident to the front slope at low level. The main roof incorporates a "broken pitch" design, with the sections of roofing at eaves level to the front and rear being at a reduced pitch to that of the main slopes. In this regard, whilst the respective section of roofing was at a pitch of around 30° to the rear, the low level section to the front reduces to around 15° and which incorporates a lead soaker flashing at its junction with the main pitch, being at around 40°. Modern manufacturer's recommendations and British Standards are that clay plain tiles should not be installed at a pitch less than 35°, with tiling at lower pitches inherently prone to the actions of weathering and window driven rain; and with the shallow pitch of the front facing tiling considered the likely reason for the levels of deterioration noted.

In this regard, at the time of future roofing works, careful consideration must be given to the specification of replacement tiling; with a larger format modern interlocking tile, designed to match the appearance of traditional plain tiles considered a potential appropriate option, such as those on the attached link:

<http://www.sandtoft.com/our-products/natural-clay-range/plain-tiles/2020/product/>

Tile surfaces have weathered over time, with extensive lichen build-up present, notably to the rear facing slope. Such vegetation can encourage the trapping of moisture and lead to accelerated deterioration and should be removed during periodic maintenance.

Mortar pointing to hip and ridge tiling has previously been attended to. However, it would appear that a relatively thin layer of new mortar has been “flushed over” the existing, and which is inherently prone to the actions of weathering and premature failure; with several sections of mortar having failed in this regard. In addition, such maintenance works would appear to have not addressed mortar pointing between the tiles, with gaps generally evident.

Whilst the lead lining to the front facing valley is in functional condition, internal inspection indicated a large amount of “daylight” and the need to carry out remedial works including mortar pointing of valley tiling should be anticipated. In addition, a large but isolated area of weed growth was present to the valley, requiring removal.

The hip iron to the rear has corroded/failed and which should be provided at the time of future roof maintenance works.

Tiling at eaves level incorporates a slate undercloak and a bituminous felt, which is in a deteriorated condition, with several slipped slates and the felt in a brittle/friable condition.

External inspection from ground level did not indicate the presence of any means of cross ventilation to the main roof space. The absence of such ventilation can result in the build-up of stagnant air, with potential rot attack to timbers as a consequence. It is therefore recommended that suitable ventilation, by means of vent tiles and/or a breathable underlay be provided at the time of future roofing works.

The rear facing roof slope incorporates a panel of glass and lead composition. Whilst in a weathered condition, commensurate with age, this is considered functional.

Having regard to the current condition of the main roof covering externally, you should anticipate total renewal of the tiled covering as being necessary within the next 3-5 years. However, maintenance including the replacement of displaced/broken tiles, re-bedding of ridge and hip tiling and mortar pointing of the front facing valley should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity and which may extend the life of the covering. However, given the level of deterioration noted, the carrying out of large-scale repairs and maintenance may not be an economically advantageous option.

You should be aware that complete renewal of a roof covering including the tiling battens and underlay felt is subject to a full Building Regulation application, with the additional associated costs to be anticipated.

The front facing bay incorporates a flat roof with a lead sheet covering and which is in sound functional condition.

Dormers to the front and rear would appear to incorporate similar roof coverings and whilst access for inspection could not be gained, there is no reason to suspect these elements as being defective.

However, dormer side cheeks and vertical front faces incorporate a painted lead, or similar, sheet finish and which is in a deteriorated condition, with extensive blistering of the material noted and which may be a contributory factor toward defects noted around the dormers internally and which should be appropriately addressed during future maintenance.

Thermal insulation standards to the dormer roofs are likely to be low; with failed decoration noted internally likely to be condensation related as a consequence.

2.4.2 Chimney Stacks & Flashings

The property incorporates a brick built chimney stack, adjacent to the ridge line and which is shared with the adjoining property; surmounted with cement mortar flaunching and incorporating, in total, 7 no. clay pots and a gas flue terminal. Flashing details between the stack brickwork and roof tiling are formed in lead.

Previous re-pointing works have been carried out to stack brickwork in isolated locations. However, it would also appear that the original mortar was inadequately raked out of joints, with the newly applied mortar "flushed over" the existing. Such re-pointing is prone to the actions of weathering and frost and as a likely consequence; several joints were noted as being cracked or with missing mortar.

In this regard, several bricks were locally displaced, affecting the upper levels of the stack.

It is therefore recommended that affected joints be raked out to a depth at least twice their width and re-pointing carried out using a suitable mortar mix during the course of periodic maintenance. It should be noted that the application of a hard cement mortar will impede the evaporation of moisture from the brickwork, increasing the likelihood of frost damage occurring.

Stepped lead upstand flashings and soakers appear generally sound and functional. However, the junction of the flashing with the brickwork incorporates cement mortar pointing which is inherently prone to failure, presenting the potential for water ingress to the building fabric. It is therefore recommended that in order to maintain the watertight integrity of the element, an appropriate flexible lead sealant be applied where lead is tucked into brickwork joints, at the time of future brickwork re-pointing works.

Isolated weed growth was noted around the flashing to the rear of the stack and which should be removed.

Cement mortar flaunching which surmounts the stack brickwork appeared from a limited ground level inspection to be in a weathered condition, with cracking evident, along with extensive weed growth and it is recommended that at the time of future stack maintenance works, defective cement mortar be removed and new flaunching applied, including the uplifting, cleaning and re-bedding of clay pots.

The clay pots are afforded wire bird cages.

Where redundant flues are present to chimney stacks, these should be capped in a manner that allows ventilation of the flue. Ventilation is necessary in order to limit the opportunity of condensation occurring within the flues, with potential dampness as a consequence.

A minor degree of distortion/misalignment was evident to stack brickwork. Such a defect is likely to have arisen as a consequence of flue gasses reacting with sulphates within the cement mortar over time, which is particularly common to unlined flues and is not considered unusual to properties of such an age and nature and not of immediate concern.

It should be noted that repair works to the chimney stacks would require scaffolding and thus incur additional costs.

2.4.3 External Walls & Structure

The walls are generally of traditional cavity brickwork construction, with an overall thickness of around 300mm.

As is common in buildings of this age/type, brickwork to the front and side elevations is of a higher quality than that adopted for the rear.

Mortar plugs noted to facing brickwork indicate the previous installation of cavity injection thermal insulation.

When checked with a builder's spirit level, walls were found to be reasonably plumb and square, without adverse bowing or misalignment. However, a degree of misalignment was noted to the gable wall and front facing bay brickwork. See also section 2.1.

Several areas of eroded/weathered mortar pointing were noted; along with previous patch re-pointing of brickwork having been undertaken, but which has adopted a hard, cement-rich mortar and which has been "flushed" over the existing, with the original mortar inadequately raked out. Such pointing is inherently prone to the actions of weather and premature failure; with the adoption of hard cement-rich mortar likely to result in the trapping of moisture, thereby increasing the likelihood of frost damage.

Facing brickwork to the rear elevation is in a deteriorated condition, with weathering and erosion of mortar pointing and brick surfaces evident; and with several bricks significantly frost damaged, with surfaces eroded by up to 30mm in depth and with the brick material in a soft and friable state; and which is likely exacerbated by the application of hard cement-rich mortar pointing, as noted above.

It is therefore recommended that mortar joints to brickwork be raked out to a depth at least twice their width, and by a minimum of 20mm, and re-pointing carried out adopting a 1:1:6 cement: lime: sand mortar mix; and with mortar to incorporate either a bucket handle or weather struck profile. Remedial works will also require the careful cutting out and replacement of those bricks worst affected by the actions of frost, with associated cost implications to be anticipated.

The upper level walls to the front and side incorporate cement render with a masonry painted finish. Whilst in generally functional condition, isolated areas of hollow/de-bonded render were noted to the front elevation, notably to the right side of the bay and to the left of the living room window. It is therefore recommended that, in order to prevent accelerated deterioration of this element from the actions of weathering, appropriate remedial repairs be undertaken and which should include the hacking off and replacement of any de-bonded/defective render. It is important to note that applied masonry decoration should be of a "breathable" type; thus allowing moisture and air to be released whilst preventing rain from penetrating.

Lintels are not generally visible to the heads of openings. In this regard, minor settlement was noted as affecting the brick-on-end soldier courses over the side facing windows. It is not uncommon for external wall openings to properties of this age and type to not incorporate lintels, with support provided

by the original timber windows; subsequently replaced with PVCu framed elements and it is feasible that this may be the source of the settlement noted. Whilst not of immediate concern, these elements should be periodically monitored to ensure that any movement is non-progressive.

2.4.4 Foundations

No opening up works or excavations have been carried out to expose the foundations beneath the building and we are therefore unable to determine their form of construction or condition.

It is assumed that foundations have been taken down to a suitable depth and are functional, although unlikely to comply with present day standards.

2.4.5 Damp Proof Course and Sub Floor Ventilation

Virtually every urban property built in the last 120 years or so will have some sort of damp proof course (DPC) in its walls. Many materials are in use, some being better than others. The majority of the houses built in the last 60 years or so have a felt or PVC based damp proof course. Before then slate or bitumen were frequently used. Many old houses have no built-in anti-damp protection.

In order that a damp proof course can perform properly its line should always be at least two clear courses of brick (150mm) above paths or garden surfaces. Whenever a lesser distance exists the damp proof course can become ineffective and internal dampness can occur.

The existence of a physical damp proof course within the external walls of the main building was not apparent at the time of the inspection; with any DPC present either sandwiched and concealed within a brickwork mortar joint, or perhaps more likely given the age of the property, having generally deteriorated/eroded over time. However, DPC related rising dampness was not noted at the time of the inspection.

Ventilation of the suspended timber sub-floor is provided by means of 4 no. air bricks to the front elevation and a single air brick to the side. Whilst functional at present, you may wish to consider the installation of additional air bricks to the side and rear, in order to ensure an adequate degree of cross-ventilation is provided.

2.4.6 Foul Drainage

I believe the property is connected to adopted mains drainage.

The water tightness of drainage can only be determined by carrying out a formal test.

Two inspection chambers are present, to the side of the property and adjacent to the front facing boundary respectively.

A cover lift inspection was undertaken to the side facing chamber and which was noted as being of traditional brickwork construction with concrete benching, branch inlets and with a cast iron covers and frame; and around 500mm deep.

The chamber appeared in sound condition, with no obvious blockages or defects evident, and from a running tap and cistern flush check, appeared free-flowing.

The concrete bedding to the frame of the side facing chamber was extensively cracked/loose and the need to carry out repair or replacement of the bedding should be anticipated.

The cover of the chamber adjacent to the front facing boundary was noted as being cracked; preventing further inspection and which should be replaced at the earliest opportunity.

2.5 INTERIOR

2.5.1 Roof Space

A limited “head and shoulders” inspection of the roof structure was undertaken via the access hatches located to the landing; and within the cupboard over the staircase, respectively.

The structure consisted of site cut timber purlins (horizontal members) of approximately 170 x 70mm, supporting 75 x 50mm common rafters (diagonal members) at 450mm centres.

Roof timbers appear reasonably well formed, being free from significant deflection, distortion or spread; and with no significant damp ingress noted.

Being typical of properties of this age and type, no underlay or sarking material is provided to the roof slopes internally, with mortar torching applied internally along horizontal tiles joints. Torching is in generally poor condition, with several areas of failure having occurred overtime.

Torching serves a dual function of weatherproofing the tiles joints and securing tile nibs in place; and with the failure noted a likely contributory factor toward the displacement of roof tiling noted externally. Care should therefore be taken to ensure such elements remain sound and weather tight and it is recommended that remedial works be undertaken during future roof maintenance.

Isolated “daylight” was evident internally around the line of the front facing valley, and which should be addressed at the time of future roofing maintenance works. See also section 2.4.1.

Thermal insulation of the roof space was noted as having been upgraded, with an overall depth of mineral quilt of around 250mm, including insulation to the access hatch, and which is considered satisfactory.

2.5.2 Internal Walls & Partitions

External walls are of traditional cavity construction with internal plaster finishes.

The internal partitions are a combination of lightweight studwork construction and plastered masonry.

Random knocking of walls did not identify any significant plaster key loss; with the internal walls on the whole being true and vertical, without adverse bowing

or other significant misalignment. Some loose/hollow sounding plaster is inevitable in a property of this age and you will be required to undertake patch repairs during the course of normal redecoration.

Cracking of wall plaster was noted as affecting the kitchen and adjacent dining room. See also section 2.1.

Isolated deterioration of plasterwork was noted around the internal dormer cheeks. This is considered a consequence of natural movement of the building elements over time, exacerbated by the deteriorated dormer linings noted externally, with potential previous damp ingress as a consequence. Whilst not of immediate concern, appropriate remedial repairs to dormers should be undertaken during the course of future maintenance.

2.5.3 Floors

Floors throughout generally incorporate carpet finishes.

The floors are generally of suspended board on joist construction; with a solid concrete floor provided to the rear area of the kitchen.

The timber floors were generally noted as being out-of-level/deflected, with significant falls noted across the span of the floors to the front facing living room and to a lesser degree, the front facing bedroom. However, this is considered typical to properties of this type, commensurate with age and not of concern.

Notwithstanding the above, the floors are generally firm underfoot, being free from significant springing or vibration within their span; with isolated springing not of concern.

It is unlikely that the concrete flooring incorporates any form of insulation which can give rise to problems of condensation. However, the effects can usually be restricted by good ventilation and a regular source of background heat.

3.0 HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Whilst essentially outside of the scope of this instruction, the following items were noted during the inspection.

3.1 Polystyrene Ceiling Tiles

The first floor ceilings incorporated polystyrene tiles. Such tiles represent a fire risk and should be removed.

3.2 Glazing

Several glazed internal doors are present to the property. A visual inspection strongly indicated glazing as not being of the toughened safety standard required in such locations and consequently, either re-glazing or the application of an appropriate proprietary film to the existing glass, should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The property is of traditional design and construction and no evidence was found of any significant defects or shortcomings.

The property does not display any evidence of progressive significant structural movement; with cracking/movement evident to the kitchen and front facing bays considered to be long-standing and not an indication of structural issues affecting the property.

Whilst evidence of wood-boring insects was noted to the under-stair cupboard, remedial action would appear to have been undertaken and such infestation is considered to be non-progressive.

The property was investigated for damp in accessible areas and no significant penetrating or rising dampness was found. Dampness noted to the shower room partition wall, as a likely consequence of defects around the shower enclosure, should be appropriately addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The main roof was in a deteriorated condition, with the need to carry out large scale repair or replacement of the tiled finish to be anticipated as becoming necessary within the next 3-5 years; but with a degree of remedial repairs now required.

There remain several items of maintenance and repair which you will need to address.

The defects brought forward in this report are not unexpected in a property of this age and construction.

This is not an exhaustive list of all those repairs which would normally be undertaken during the course of general redecoration, refurbishment and/or maintenance works. Additional works may be required due to statutory requirements or as a result of opening up works during the course of normal refurbishment/alteration works

The costs are for budgetary purposes only and are based on experience and rates obtained from previous refurbishment projects and price books. No competitive quotations have been obtained from contractors.

It should be remembered that the condition of a property is a constantly changing variable. With the passage of time, new defects can arise and existing ones worsen. The report should only be construed as a record of the condition of the property at the time of inspection. As a general rule, it is recommended that a re-inspection be commissioned every two or so years. In this way, the early warning signs of any recurrence of a problem or the onset of new problems can be identified. Such advice should, in general terms, lead to an overall cost saving providing the remedial works or maintenance items recommended are carried out.

Remedial repairs to main roof tiling, ridge and hips	£1,500.00
Provision of new tiled roofing, including battens, felt and insulation	£9,500.00
Remedial repairs to dormers	£750.00
Re-pointing of chimney stack and repairs to cement flaunching	£1,000.00
Re-pointing of brickwork, including repairs to frost damaged areas	£750.00
Remedial repairs to cement render	£200.00
Re-bed inspection chamber cover/frame	£50.00
Replacement of cracked inspection chamber cover	£50.00

Hack off damp affected plaster to hall and apply new render £350.00