BUILDING SURVEY REPORT

In Respect Of

xxxx

On Behalf Of

xxxx

ADM
January 2020

Barn 1 The Chequers The Green Gazeley Newmarket Suffolk CB8 8RF
Tel: 01638 750019 Email: contact@bsinitiative.co.uk
Company No.6633912

Directors
Andrew Moulsdale BSc FRICS & Oliver Goodson BSc (Hons) MRICS

1.00 INSTRUCTIONS.

In response to your instructions confirmed via email dated xxxx we can confirm that we have inspected the property, which is currently occupied and consists of a flat located on the top two floors of a purpose built four storey block. In this report on the structural and general condition of the property, prepared in context of the type and age of the premises, we have endeavoured to identify the defects found during our inspection and draw your attention to those items which, in our opinion, are likely to give rise to exceptional expenditure in the future. This report, which may not be copied without our authority, is presented strictly for your own use in conjunction with the proposed leasehold purchase of the flat and for no other purpose.

2.00 INSPECTION.

Our survey was carried out on a single visit on xxxx at which time the weather was overcast. In order to discover evidence of present or potential defects to enable us to report as outlined above, our inspection extended to all areas accessible to both the interior and exterior of the premises without carrying out damaging exposure works or the use of long ladders.

There are, of course, in any building many elements which remain concealed or inaccessible after initial construction and cannot therefore be effectively inspected subsequently. We are bound to point out therefore, that we have not inspected woodwork, steelwork, concrete or other parts of the structure and fabric of the premises which were covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we cannot therefore report that such parts of the property were free from rot, corrosion or other defects etc. In particular there was no access to other flats within the building and therefore we cannot report on areas of the property that were inaccessible. Access was not available to the main roof of the building and we were accordingly unable to inspect areas of the building at upper levels other than from distant ground floor vantage points.

Where water ingress has occurred within a building the risk of the development of rot is much increased. If it develops, dry rot can spread quickly through timber sections of a property and infect brickwork thus resulting in significant damage and extensive and costly repair works. Dry rot can also spread from an initial source of water ingress and affect other timber structures in close proximity. Based on our limited we did not record circumstances whereby the development of dry rot may have occurred within the property; however we cannot rule out this possibility.

We have not carried out any intrusive investigation or excavation of trial pits, which would have required consent from the freeholder and also permission from the vendor. Similarly, we have not lifted floor coverings or floorboards and therefore we cannot report on sections of the property that were concealed at the time of our inspection. In addition, we would also confirm that we have not tested hermetic seals to double glazed windows and cannot confirm the condition of these components.

Asbestos is often contained in many components of buildings but is often concealed in the structure and fabric of the property. Where material is evident and could possibly contain asbestos we have highlighted recommended remedial works. Most asbestos cement and boarded surfaces do not pose any prejudicial risk to health but where material is potentially dangerous this has been detailed. We have not however carried out testing of any material to confirm if asbestos exists within its construction. The age and nature of the property is such that asbestos is likely to have been utilised in its original construction and whilst much of this material may have been removed some asbestos based materials and components may still be retained within the property. The Artex recorded to the ceilings may well contain traces of asbestos and should be tested for confirmation by specialist contractors.

In accordance with your instructions, we have not tested any of the service installations, incoming mains, wastes, drains or other such elements of the property and accordingly therefore we cannot report on their safety, adequacy and standard of installation. We have however reported our findings in outline later in this report to assist your instructions to specialist contractors if further information is required.

3.00 ENQUIRIES.

We would confirm that we have not checked the details contained in any agents' particulars nor made enquiries with the local or other authorities, which are normally dealt with by your solicitor.
At the time of our inspection we were unable to determine whether the purchase of the flat includes a share of the freehold, which in this instance is considered unlikely. Your solicitor should therefore clarify matters in this regard and determine your service charge liabilities pertaining to the upkeep of the shared elements of the property in which the flat is located.

Additionally, we have not sought to identify ownership of the various boundary fences and hedges or establish what easements may affect the dwelling and accordingly your solicitor should advise on these points and other environmental issues covered in their standard searches. The block forms part of a larger estate and presumably maintenance costs for the entire area are shared between the various buildings. Your solicitor should provide details so that your potential future obligations are fully understood.

It may also be prudent to assess the risk of flooding and the possible existence of Radon and other gas based pollutants on or nearby the site. The property is in an area where Radon is not known to be exist. In our view the risk of flooding is no greater than average however advice from standard searches should be sought. We have not undertaken a desktop contamination assessment and cannot rule out the possibility of old industrial workings or former uses of the site, which could increase the risk of landslips or contamination. Given the location of the property these risks are considered to be no greater than average although further studies may be considered prudent.

The area is known to suffer from subsidence and the building may well be constructed on shrinkable clay sub strata. Carefully considerations regarding ground searches is required and we would refer you to our comments later within this report.

4.00 TENURE.

We understand that you are acquiring the long leasehold interest in the property with vacant possession, which obviously gives rise to a shared responsibility to the overall maintenance of the building. Your solicitor should therefore clarify your precise liabilities in respect of the service charge covenants within the lease and also the possible existence of a sinking fund collection. We are unaware if the purchase of the flat includes a share of the freehold although we anticipate that this may not be the case.

The communal areas of the building for which a service charge liability arises are covered within Part A of this report whilst Part B assesses the condition of the flat which is presumed to be the responsibility solely of the lessee. Your solicitor should ascertain that the windows are the responsibility of the freeholder and form part of the communal elements of the building, which is assumed for the purpose of this report.

5.00 PREMISES.

We assume that you are familiar with the premises, which effectively consist of a flat located on the top two floors of a property thought to have been constructed between1960 and 1970. The building is weathered predominately by means of a timber structured flat roof although it was not possible to gain access onto the roof.

The building is structured, we believe by a concrete frame some of which may utilise pre-cast components. The building has been much altered and originally was weathered with exposed pre-cast aggregate finish concrete cladding panels although these have been largely concealed by thermal insulation and render. Loads are passed from the roofs to the concrete frame, which also provides the support for precast concrete floor slabs that were recorded during our inspection.

6.00 SECURITY.

The flat accessed from the common parts which have front and rear access doors. Stairs lead to an open balcony at second floor level leading directly to the flat. Good security is provided to the common parts and these are secured by entry phone systems however we would recommend that the existing facilities be comprehensively reviewed in conjunction with your insurers on purchase of the flat to ascertain that their precise requirements are complied with. In addition, we would recommend that the main flat door locks be changed immediately on your purchase of the property and perhaps that the burglar alarm system is installed within the flat.

7.00 MEANS OF ESCAPE/ FIRE PRECAUTIONS.

The means of escape and fire precautions appertaining to buildings of this age and nature are covered by various statutes and the current Building Regulations. The property has not been fully upgraded in accordance with current building regulations and is therefore considered potentially poor in terms of means of escape. The common parts have no fire alarm systems and presumably a stay put fire strategy is in place.

Internally within the flat a basic smoke alarm installation exists however in our opinion this should be upgraded to comply with current standards.

8.00 ENERGY EFFICIENCY.

The flat is considered to be of poor energy efficiency given the limited levels of thermal insulation. The retention of poorly insulated external walls and the type and age of the property is such that heat loss is expected to be in excess of current standards. Heat loss may well affect the internal environment within the flat and could facilitate the development of condensation. Condensation was recorded within the kitchen in particular. It is essential therefore that moisture laden air is expelled from kitchens and bathrooms and improvement to the existing facilities are strongly recommended.

Improvement to the level of thermal insulation to walls are also strongly recommended although works of this nature have been undertaken previously. The design and installation of external components has not been adequately designed and deficiencies remain.

The windows to the flat are double glazed although these are not as energy efficient as current standards. The windows are deteriorated and upgrading of the windows with new components should be contemplated and anticipated within the foreseeable future.

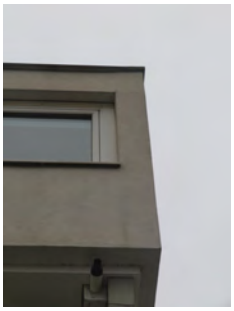
9.00 PART A – ELEMENTS OF CONSTRUCTION FOR WHICH WE BELIEVE RESPONSIBILITY IS SHARED BETWEEN THE VARIOUS FLAT OWNERS WITH COSTS RECOVERED THROUGH THE SERVICE CHARGE PROVISIONS OF THE LEASE.

9.01 Chimney Stacks.

We recorded no evidence of chimney stacks to the building, although we must report that we had no access at roof level to the property and as such, therefore, cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard. No flues or fireplaces were recorded within the flat internally.

9.02 Parapet Walls.

We cannot determine if any parapet walls exist to the property as no access was available to the main roof. It would appear that the roof is of flat formation with an edging trim, rather than a parapet, weathering the junction between the roof and the walls at high level, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.



Edge protection is provided so that access to inspect the roof for maintenance and remedial works purposes could be obtained; however, we were prevented from accessing the roof by locked gates internally to the common parts areas.

The existing edging trim detail appears to be acceptable; however, rainwater does appear to discharge from the roof and wall junction and cause some minor damage and staining to sections of the building at lower levels, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. This is of relatively minor extent and of limited concern, in our view.

We believe, therefore, that there are no traditional parapets existing as part of the building, although limitations of access to upper levels was such that we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard.

9.03 Roof.

The roof to the building appears to be of flat construction; however, as detailed, we were unable to gain access onto this, nor was it possible to view the roof from any vantage point. It would appear that the roof is of flat construction and, we anticipate, is weathered by means of a bitumastic based felt material laid perhaps within the last 10 years, although we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard.

Where access was obtained to upper levels of the property we recorded no evidence which would indicate leaks or particular defects to the roof; however, we cannot comment on its nature and condition and report therefore when replacement may be anticipated. If the roof is of high performance felt formation and it was installed in conjunction with the refurbishment of the building, which we anticipate was undertaken perhaps 10 years ago, some remaining life expectancy is to be anticipated. Felt flat roof coverings, and indeed the majority of flat roof coverings, do require replacement on a regular basis and, whilst we cannot advice precisely on the condition of the existing material, replacement of the roof covering must be anticipated in due course.

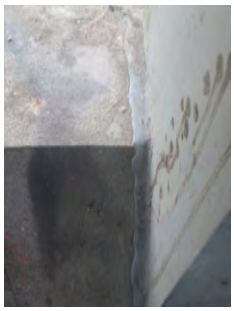
We were unable to gain sight of the levels of thermal insulation incorporated within the roof and cannot confirm that these are compliant with current Building Regulations. If the works were undertaken some years ago, it is unlikely that the level of thermal insulation is compliant with current standards and upgrading of levels of thermal insulation may well be required in the future.

Where access was available to the top floor of the building, we recorded no evidence of condensation which would indicate the absence of thermal insulation; however, we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard.

The walkway which provides access to the upper storeys of the building is exposed to the elements and we believe, is of concrete formation and weathered by means of a paving asphalt, as illustrated below.

We recorded no evidence to indicate the incorporation of thermal insulation, resulting in cold conditions to the rooms beneath, which may increase the risk of condensation. Intrusive investigation may identify insulation; however, certainly improvement to the levels of thermal insulation in conjunction with future works are required.

The junction of the columns, balustrade and asphalt waterproof membrane to the balcony exhibit a potential source of water ingress, in our opinion, and mastics have been introduced, presumably to combat water penetration, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.

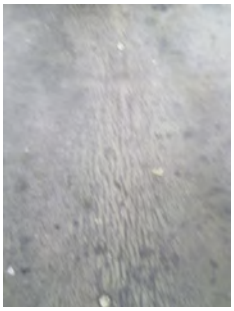


The mastic asphalt is beginning to deteriorate and splits are evident around columns, which could allow water ingress to occur during certain wind-driven rain conditions, as illustrated below.

Surface indentations and damage to the asphalt by use were also evident generally, as illustrated by reference to the following photographs.



Expansion within the building has also caused rippling or crazing within the asphalt surface which, over time, is likely to result in splits developing and consequential water ingress into the flats beneath.



The asphalt membrane is, in our opinion, approaching the end of its useful life, although it remains serviceable. In some areas water penetration is likely to affect flats at lower levels.

9.04 Rainwater Goods.

Rainwater from the main roof appears to discharge via gulley's into cast iron downpipes. We had not access to the main roof and therefore cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard; however, within a service riser internally within the property, cast iron downpipes descend from the roof above, as illustrated below.


Leaks have clearly occurred in and around the gulley's historically, causing damage to the cladding and corrosion of reinforcement within the concrete slab and ducting, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. We recorded no evidence of water penetration at the time of our inspection. Making good of the downpipes and gulley's is to be anticipated and replacement of down pipes must be anticipated within the foreseeable future.

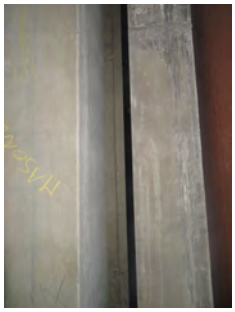
Rainwater from the balconies is discharged via small overflow pipes which, if surcharged, would discharge onto the pavement below. The overflow pipes are illustrated generally by reference to the following photographs and are serviced by internal openings within the asphalt and balcony weatherings.

The design of the outlets and the details is somewhat poor and water ingress could occur in these vicinities.

9.05 Walls and Structure.

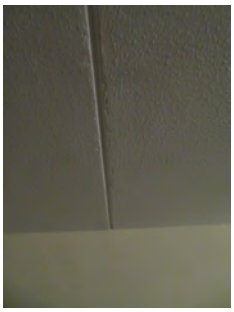
The structure of the building appears to take the form of a framed structure with originally pre-cast concrete panels forming the walls, although these have been subsequently over-clad with thermal insulation and rendered externally, as evident to the flank elevation of the building by reference to the following photograph.

The frame to the building appears to consist of square columns and load bearing concrete wall structures, as illustrated below.

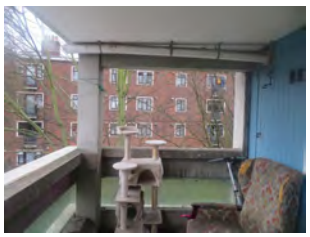


We cannot confirm our suspicions; however, it would appear that the frame is hollow and pre-cast in nature. It is possible that the framework consists of hollow steel sections encased in concrete; however, we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard.

The frame of the building supports the floor slabs internally, which are pre-cast concrete sections, which are evident internally within the flats to the ceilings, with the joints running between the panels, as illustrated below.



Much of the structure and framework of the building was concealed from view and internal access was available only to Flat 8 and Flat 21 at the time of our inspection. Limited access was available to the common parts, which also revealed evidence of the concrete framed structure, as illustrated below.



The building generally holds good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection, although minor cracking was evident to the rendered sections of the building, predominantly, we believe, at board joints, as illustrated below.

We recorded no evidence of subsidence or structural movement to the building and on this basis therefore we are satisfied that it remains structurally stable, although we cannot confirm our suspicions, particularly with regards to sections and components that could not be inspected.
A number of trees are located to the rear garden, which appear to have been pollarded and maintained recently, although regrowth has been strong, as shown below.

Regular pollarding and maintenance of the trees is perhaps necessary to minimise the risk of subsidence developing in the future. It is likely that the building is constructed on clay substrata; however, during the course of our survey we were unable to gain sight of the foundations and cannot confirm their nature and extent and that these are sufficient to prevent subsidence developing in the future. We anticipate that the foundations are of a significant depth, given the height of the building; however, we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard. Regular pollarding and maintenance of trees is therefore essential, as these can extract moisture from the substrata, causing desiccation over time which could undermine the foundations and result in subsidence.

It is imperative that the freehold maintains adequate building insurance which should incorporate appropriate levels of subsidence cover in the unlikely event of the development of this defect.

The wall panels appear to have been left exposed to various sections and are of a fairly standard aggregate finished reinforced concrete panel formation, as illustrated below.

In isolated areas we recorded minor damage to panels, possibly following the insertion of fixings, as illustrated below.

Similar failure of panels that are now concealed by thermal insulation may occur, although this is unlikely to be of any significant consequence at this time. Where visible, it is clear that the suspension of panels from the frames has potentially been poor historically and the gaps are not entirely perpendicular, as illustrated below. This is of no significant concern, in our view, but perhaps illustrates that the quality of construction and the pre-fabrication of components is not of the highest order.

The majority of the pre-cast concrete cladding panels were concealed from view but, where visible, these remained in fair condition, although sections of graffiti were recorded in isolated areas, as illustrated below.

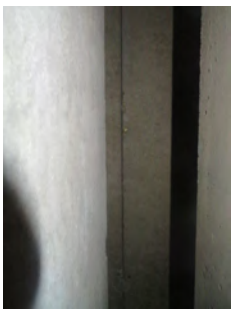
The panels appear to have a metal backing strip running behind as a form of waterproof protection to the effective rainscreen cladding provided by the concrete panels, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. In general, where visible, these metal strips appear to remain in serviceable condition however we cannot confirm that they remain watertight. Such claddings and buildings of this type can frequently experience water ingress due to defects in design and construction, particularly the absence of cavity trays etc. We recorded no evidence of this and the introduction of the water proof render clearly reduces risks in this respect.

The concrete cladding panels are of pre-cast formation and it is normal for these to be suspended by fixings from the concrete frame. During the course of our survey we were unable to gain sight of any fixings; however, the apparent suspension of panels was evident at low level, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.

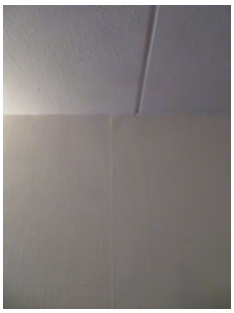
Pre-cast concrete panels can be prone to fractures, which affect their integrity, and also spalling concrete due to corrosion of the steel reinforcement within the panels. The majority of the panels were concealed from view and therefore we cannot report on any defects of this nature, although we must advise that, where the panels were evident, we recorded no evidence of fractures or spalling concrete.

The frame of the building, if it is pre-cast concrete in construction as we anticipate, may also be prone to failure and spalling of sections; however, again we recorded no evidence of this at the time of our inspection. Where exposed externally, the columns appear to remain in good condition.

Internally the cladding panels were mostly concealed and similar cladding or pre-cast concrete components may well have formed sub-division between individual units, although we cannot confirm our suspicions in this respect. Within access ducts the inside of the external cladding panels was identified, albeit only in limited extent, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.



Within various rooms to the flats, joints within walls were identified which appear to illustrate the existence of joints and pre-cast concrete components sub-dividing units as illustrated below.



Pre-cast concrete building components and structures of this type may have utilised high alumina cement (HAC) in their formation. This was utilised to rapid hardening of the material so that it could be transferred from factory to site and utilised more quickly than otherwise as it obtained its cured strength rapidly. Such material, however, has been found thereafter to lose its strength if it becomes saturated and, as such, is of significant concern. We cannot confirm, based on a visual inspection, if the materials utilised in the construction of the building contain high alumina cement. Details should be sought from the freeholder to ascertain if this material was used in its construction, or thereafter it may be prudent to obtain physical samples of various sections for confirmation. HAC is therefore now considered a deleterious material and would have a significant effect on the overall structural integrity of the building. In our opinion, it is unlikely that any significant HAC content exists within the pre-cast concrete sections; however, we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard and it was frequently used in components such as those evident to form the balustrading of the building.

To the exposed balcony walkway at second floor level, closer inspection of the concrete cladding panels forming the balustrade railing was possible. The panels appear to have been of good quality, although pre-cast structures of this nature can be prone to tolerance issues and poor quality control in their manufacture. Labels attached to the inside of the panels indicate use of a Phil-block component, as illustrated below. We are not aware of this manufacturer and an internet search revealed no details of this company.

The panels again appear to suspend or hung from the concrete frame, with the junction evident as illustrated by reference to the following photographs.


The balustrading to the second floor walkway incorporates a top rail and a bottom rail, with a glazed section set within, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.

We recorded at least one section of the glass infill that was broken, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. We cannot confirm if the glass is safety glass compliant with current regulations and it is perhaps unlikely that this is the case, although clearly in overall terms adequate strength is provided by the balustrade.

The majority of the building to the front elevation and the rear elevation, as illustrated below, has however had new insulation introduced, which has been rendered to a finish with a pre-formed waterproof resin render application, as illustrated below.


Unusually, sections of the ground floor of the building were not undertaken and the aggregate panels remain exposed, as illustrated below.

We anticipate that the insulation material is rigid in formation, which may include polyurethane-type components such as those which caught fire at Grenfell. We cannot, however, confirm our suspicions in this regard, as sight of the insulation material was not available. Given the pre-cast concrete nature of the building and the external finish, it is unlikely that a flame spread could develop within the cladding; however, reference to the building regulations and also forthcoming Government legislation may change guidelines on claddings.

It is possible that the insulation used is a mineral wool, which is not flammable; however, without intrusive investigation we cannot confirm our suspicions in this respect. Details from the freeholder should be obtained of the works carried out and when these were undertaken so that a further assessment can be made.

The Building Regulations and current guidance on the use of flammable cladding material varies, dependent on the height of buildings. Where a building has a height in excess of 18m, the use of flammable material is prohibited; however, in this instance the building is perhaps no greater than 15m in height and a lesser standard applies.

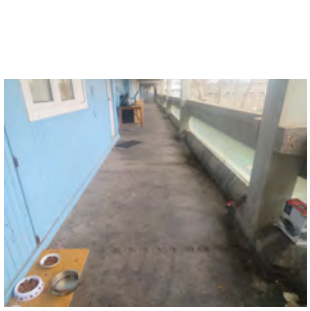
The render and the application generally remain in fair condition; however, some cracked sections were recorded, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. Much of this damage, however, relates to leaks from boiler flues and perhaps defective capping's above.

Leaks from boiler flues and overflows have also caused staining to the pre-finished render, as illustrated by reference to the following photographs. Such deterioration may hasten the need to carry out repairs or replacement of the rendering over time.



The thermal insulation which has been applied to the building appears to have been carried out adequately, however the design of the workmanship is flawed, in our opinion, and much of the insulation is of only very limited benefit, particularly to the ground floor flats. Obviously, the omission of thermal insulation externally to lower ground floors is such that these walls are uninsulated other than where perhaps thermal insulation has been incorporated internally. We recorded no evidence of this and again removal of plasterboard linings beneath windows would be necessary to determine matters. It appears somewhat unusual, however, that insulation has been applied to all levels bar the ground floor.

The thermal insulation which has been applied at first floor level is also limited in effect in that this does not entirely wrap the cold external frame in thermal insulation and the inside of the framework to the walkway is effectively uninsulated and thus cold and exposed to the elements, as illustrated by reference to the following photographs.



As a consequence, cold bridging is likely to occur and internally we recorded evidence of condensation, which is in keeping of defects and failure in this respect, as illustrated by reference to the following photographs.

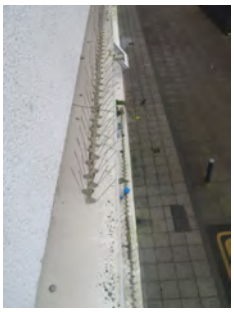

The thermal insulation, where applied to the upper parts and the top two floors, appears to be of more benefit; however, given the fact that the front elevation does not run directly above the floor beneath, the floor at third floor level is effectively not insulated. Lining boards have been incorporated, however, where these have been removed by others and the concrete slab was clearly evident, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.

The thermal insulation which has been applied is therefore of some benefit, but only limited extent. The internal environment within the flats is likely to be energy inefficient and all flats within the building are prone to condensation, particularly if moisture laden air is not readily expelled from the building. In this regard we would refer you to our comments later in the report with respect to mechanical ventilation systems. Condensation was evident to the window frames, as illustrated particularly by reference to the following photograph.

Our comments with regards to the energy efficiency and condition of the windows should also be considered.

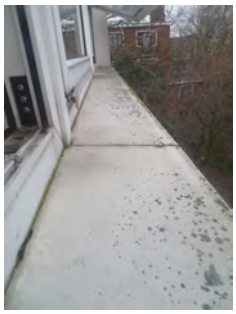
As a consequence of the insulation to the outer face of the balustrade, a capping detail has been introduced, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.

In some sections, pigeon spikes have been added to the capping's to prevent roosting, as illustrated below.



The spikes have not been placed universally along the ledges and have possibly been introduced only by individual lessees. Pigeon roosting may therefore be of concern to open areas of the building from time to time.

Similar capping details have also been introduced to window cills to weather the junction between the original cladding and the insulation, as illustrated below.




There is evidence of water penetration and deterioration to these capping's, which could undermine and affect the overall condition of the insulation in due course and also cause failure of the render. The trim details and capping's, where these have been introduced in various locations, do not adequately discharge rainwater clear of the render beneath, resulting in saturation in various sections, as illustrated previously and also by reference to the following photograph.

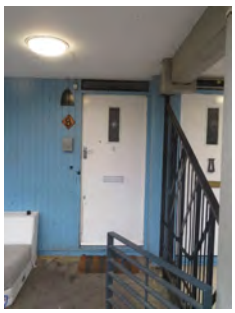
Some weathering and deterioration to the render has occurred and minor sections have been impact-damaged, as shown below.


The first photograph perhaps illustrates deterioration due to water penetration to the rear of the render. The render is pre-finished and ought not to be decorated as part of a normal maintenance process; however, often this can become necessary as the surface to the render deteriorates and ages. Replacement of the render, and possibly reformation of the insulation to the panels, must be anticipated within the future and indeed it is recommended so that the detailing can be much improved and thus the overall energy efficiency of the building enhanced.

The height of the balustrade is relatively low and, in our opinion, increasing this may well be considered prudent and would of course be necessary if thermal insulation were to be introduced, raising the floor level of the walkway.

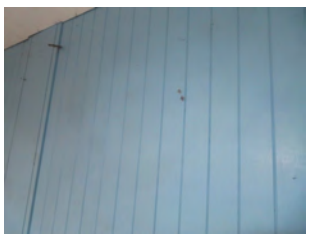
In isolated areas holes have been driven through the pre-cast concrete cladding panels, particularly for the provision of gas supplies to various areas, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. Again this illustrates the concrete construction of the cladding panels, which are mostly concealed by the thermal insulation.

To the front of the building, at ground floor level and to Flat 8 in particular, timber cladding weathers presumably a non-load bearing infill, which may well be of timber construction, as shown by reference to the following photographs. We cannot confirm the extent of thermal insulation and the construction of the cladding and intrusive investigation is recommended in this regard. It is possible that only limited security is provided by the cladding.

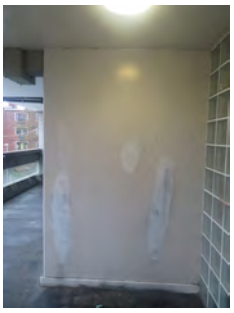


The thickness of the partition is perhaps no greater than 100mm and is illustrated to the door frame by reference to the following photograph.

The timber cladding externally is decorated and generally remains in fair condition, as illustrated below.



At first floor level, similar claddings are also evident; however, sections appear to be of plasterboard formation, at which point cracking was clearly evident close to the entrance to the communal parts, as shown below.

Within the construction we recorded evidence of expanding metal lathing which has been utilised presumably to enhance the security of the cladding. Improvements in this regard and the addition of thermal insulation is strongly recommended and must be anticipated.

To the common areas of the buildings, previously exposed communal staircases have been infilled, it would appear, with glass blocks, as illustrated below.

The glass blocks generally remain in fair condition commensurate with their age and nature. The insulation provided by the glass blocks is limited; however, there is no necessity for significant insulation levels to be provided to the common areas, which are generally unheated. The glass blocks remain in fair condition and some repointing may be required over time but, beyond this, significant remedial works are considered unlikely.

9.06 Ceilings.

At both ground and first floor level, an external ceiling has been formed to create the walkway at first floor level and a covered area leading to the entrance or individual ground floor flat doors, as illustrated below.


In both instances the ceiling appears to have been formed by a weather resistant boarding secured to the underside of the concrete floor slab above by means of timber battens, illustrated previously and again by reference to the following photographs. In no areas that could be exposed did we identify any thermal insulation.


Cracking was evident to the board joints in many areas, as these are not effectively taped but simply close-butted, as illustrated below.

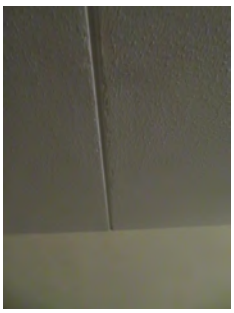
Sections of the ceilings at second floor level have been compromised by the introduction of claddings around boiler flues and additionally where boiler flues have been amended or replaced, as illustrated below. Replacement of the ceilings may well be necessary, therefore, from time to time.


At ground floor level, significant water damage is occurring to the ceilings and cladding sections close to a column, with evidence of mushroom growth being recorded, as shown below.

It is likely that this results from rot to the timber supports to which the cladding is attached. We were unable to gain sight of the timber and therefore cannot confirm the nature and extent of rot to the timbers. Given the nature and extent of the saturation, which appears to be longstanding, it is likely that wet, and possibly dry rot, has begun to develop. Dry rot, if it were to develop, could spread quickly throughout the building, away from the original source and affect many of the timbers to the under croft area. Intrusive investigation is strongly recommended so that the extent of wet, and possibly dry rot, infestation can be identified and thereafter remedial works instigated.

The quality of the ceiling installation is not of the highest order but we are generally satisfied that it remains structurally stable. The exposed edged detail and finish to downstands and soffits again has no scrim tape of joint mechanism to improve its aesthetic appearance, as illustrated below. Minor remedial works, or perhaps in due course replacement of the soffit linings, should be considered in due course.

The ceilings within many of the flats appear to consist of the exposed concrete slabs, as shown by reference to the following photograph. The concrete has been covered with an Artex coating, which is textured in nature. Given the age and type of the building it is likely, in our opinion, that the Artex coating contains traces of asbestos. Copies of the Asbestos Register or advice should be obtained from the freeholder in this regard. You may also consider it prudent to carry out an asbestos survey or test on this material so that its integral consistency can be established.

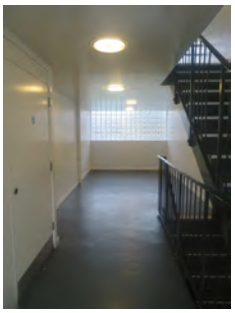


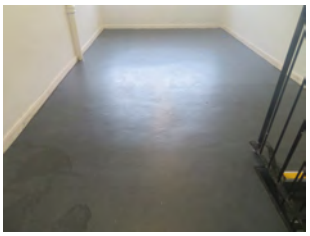
9.07 Floors.

The floors to the building, we believe, are all of in-situ cast concrete slabs. In most instances the slabs were concealed by floorboards internally within units, although the undersides are evident within certain sections of various flats, as shown previously.

Within the kitchen and bathroom area of Flat 8 there is evidence of suspended or false ducted ceilings and we would refer you to our comments therefore within Part B of this report.

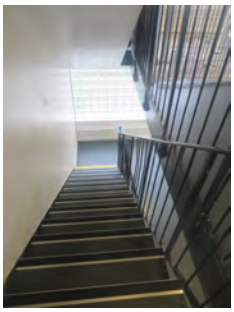
Within the common areas and staircases the floors are of solid construction and finished by means of vinyl flooring, which is a little uneven in appearance but in other regards remains in good condition.



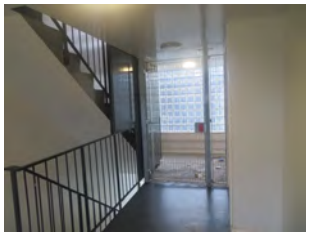


The floors generally hold good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection, as do the associated external walkways, and on this basis therefore we are satisfied that they remain structurally stable.

Access between floors is gained by means of pre-cast concrete stairs with metal balustrading and strings evident by reference to the following photograph.



The staircases generally hold good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection and on this basis therefore we are satisfied that they remain structurally stable.



Access to the common parts is secured by a strongdoor set within glass block screens, as illustrated by reference to the following photographs. The door is secured by means of electronic entry phone systems which appear to be in serviceable order at this time, although regular maintenance and perhaps renewal or replacement may well be warranted within the foreseeable future. Similar doors are also provided to the rear of the building and again these remain in good condition.

Access to Flat 21 is gained via a basic timber door which provides limited but adequate security in view, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. Improved security may be considered necessary and the introduction of a strongdoor could perhaps be necessary within due course.

9.08 Joinery.

The windows to the block appear to be a double glazed uPVC installation, as shown by reference to the following photograph.

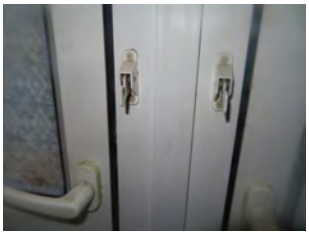

Externally, the windows remain in fair condition considering their age and nature and the pre-finished elements of the windows remain serviceable.

The quality of the original installation was not of the highest order and the energy efficiency of the sealed units is limited and far from compliant with current standards.

There is evidence also to suggest that the thermal break or insulation value of the frames is substandard and condensation was evident internally to Flat 8 to the frames of the windows, as shown below.


The windows are deteriorated and many of the frames are dirty with corroded fixings and opening mechanisms evidence, as shown below.

Internally within the flat, many of the restrictor stays, catches and security devices to the windows are also broken, as illustrated below. Similar deterioration is evident in other areas.



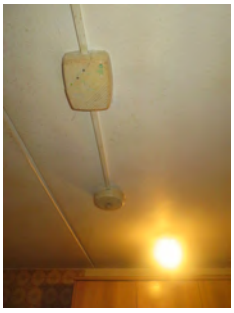

At present, remaining life expectancy does exist to the windows; however, in our view, these are of an age whereby replacement could perhaps be contemplated within the next 5-10 years. Clearly replacement of the windows throughout the block represents significant expenditure which, presumably, will be carried out by the Landlord with costs recovered from the various long lessees.

At present, where we were able to carry out a detailed inspection, we recorded no significant evidence of failure of the hermetic seals; however, this must be anticipated as being necessary within the foreseeable future.

We have detailed also that there appears to be deterioration to the capping pieces or cills of the windows which weather the junction between the windows, the original concrete panels and the new insulation. Failure of these must also be anticipated and remedial works in this regard could become necessary within the relatively near term.

Doors to the common parts are fire resistant and incorporate appropriate signage to the various risers. Within the building there is no fire alarm system. We anticipate that the fire strategy policy for the building is to stay put and await rescue by the fire brigade if required.

Within the flat there is no adequate smoke detection system and, in our view, significant upgrading of the existing system to provide a new fully compliant smoke alarm system, with heat detector in the kitchen, is essential. The existing detection system is shown within the corridor area by reference to the following photograph.



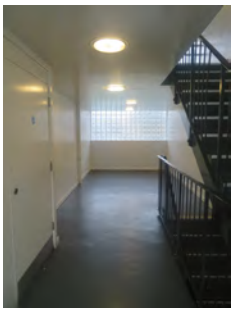
To the entrance of the property, letters denoting the name of the block are missing, as illustrated below. Replacement of these may well be considered prudent and are likely to be undertaken in the near term.

9.09 Decoration.

Externally decoration to the building is limited, given the pre-finished nature of many of the components, particularly windows and the render to the insulation. Regular redecoration of the timber claddings and common areas is to be anticipated from time to time. At present the décor to the external communal areas is serviceable; however, we have highlighted evidence of damage, deterioration and water ingress and over time, therefore, complete redecoration is to be anticipated.

The common parts to the building are relatively utilitarian. During the course of our survey we had access only to the common parts serving Flat 21 and not all common parts within the building. Based on our assessment of the accessible common areas, these generally appear to remain in serviceable condition with false suspended ceilings allowing for modern recessed LED lighting.

Walls are generally painted satisfactorily and the vinyl floor coverings are of relatively recent origin, as illustrated below. Significant redecoration works are not expected within the relatively near term.



9.10 Gardens, Boundaries & Paths.

Access is obtained to the building to both the front and rear elevations. A service road runs to the front of the block which is of tarmac finish with paving's of basic concrete formation around it and leading to the entrances, as illustrated below.

Your solicitor should clarify if the road is adopted and thus responsibility for repair and maintenance rests with the local authority, or whether this forms part of the overall housing estate with costs for resurfacing and remedial works recovered through the service charge provisions. In overall terms, the external areas appear to have been renovated relatively recently and the road surfaces and paving's generally remain in good condition.

To the rear, security is provided to open areas, which again consist of gardens, paving's and landscaped sections, as illustrated below. Security installations exist to the rear of the block.

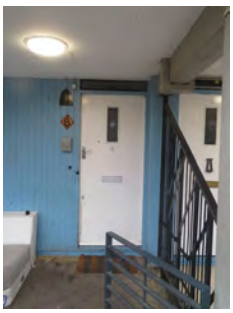




The hard standings generally remain in good condition, although the lawn and garden surfaces would benefit significantly from improved cultivation over time.

Cycle sheds have been provided for storage and use of various long lessees, as shown by reference to the following photograph.

Boundary railings have been utilised to sub-divide sections of the ground floor to provide covered external areas for certain ground floor lessees, as illustrated below. These generally remain in good condition and significant remedial works are considered unlikely in the near term.



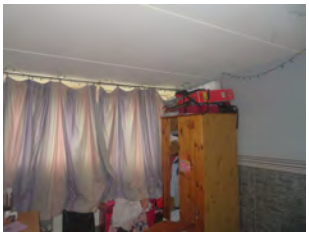
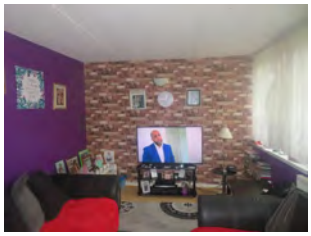
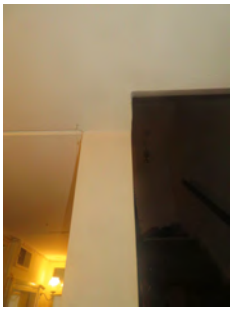
New lighting has been installed externally to the estate and the area generally with modern LED fittings being recorded. Some lighting set within the floor was also evident, which generally remained in good condition, although some sections were in working order whereas others appear not to be in adequate operation. Regular repair and maintenance of external lighting, garden areas, boundary fences and the like will be required from time to time, with expenditure recovered generally through the service charge provisions of the lease.

Surface water drainage is set within paving's with gulley's recorded, as illustrated below. The gulley's appear to be choked with leaf debris and cleaning, therefore, on a regular basis will be required.

10.00 PART B – ELEMENTS OF CONSTRUCTION FOR WHICH WE HAVE PRESUMED THAT RESPONSIBILITY RESTS SOLELY WITH THE FLAT OWNER.

10.01 Ceilings.

As detailed previously, the majority of ceilings within the flat are exposed undersides of the concrete floor slabs above, which have subsequently been artex finished, as illustrated below.

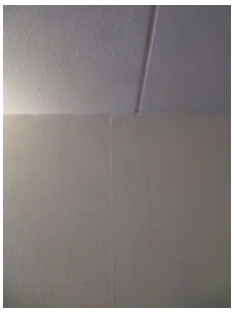




The ceilings generally hold good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection and, on this basis therefore, we are satisfied that they remain structurally stable. The Artex may well contain traces of asbestos and testing of this should be undertaken so that its condition can be established. Details of any asbestos content within the flat should be recorded on a register so that risks can be analysed by tradesmen and occupants of the building to minimise any potential health issues by disturbance of asbestos materials.

Asbestos is likely to be prevalent in a building of this type, age and nature, although we recorded no significant evidence of it. It is possible that asbestos based components have been removed previously as part of works to upgrade and renovate the building; however, a copy of the Asbestos Register should be requested from the vendor or freeholder so that issues in this regard can be considered. You may also believe it prudent to instruct a specialist asbestos survey, which would involve intrusive investigation. Specialist advice in this regard would provide a detailed assessment of the likely asbestos content and risk in relation to the building and the flat generally.

10.02 Walls.

The main party walls within the unit appear to be of pre-cast concrete formation, which have been crudely finished and then decorated. Evidence of movement within joints to the panels was evident internally, as illustrated below. In general, the walls held good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection and we are satisfied that they remain structurally stable in our opinion.



Issues of sound insulation may well exist given the pre-cast concrete nature of the slabs to the floors and walls. No evident noise intrusion was recorded at the time of our survey but this is likely to occur, dependent on the nature of the adjacent occupants.

To the external walls, to the rear elevation, and to the front elevation, plasterboard linings have been introduced beneath the windows. The quality of finish and workmanship is poor and the boarding exhibits evidence of cracking, bulging and misalignment, as illustrated below. We cannot confirm what extent of thermal insulation exists within the claddings but it is likely, in our opinion, to comply with current standards, although obviously where sections are insulated externally the requirement for levels of thermal insulation is reduced. Replacement of the plasterboard linings beneath windows to the external walls to the front and rear of the flat must be anticipated within the relatively near term.

Timber stud partitions appear to have been constructed internally within sections of the property to sub-divide individual rooms. The walls generally hold good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection, although these are not load bearing. The quality of finish is acceptable, although damage to plasterboard sections was evident.

Significant remedial works to the internal partitions is not anticipated in the near term but over boarding and replastering could be contemplated as part of any renovation and refurbishment of the property.

10.03 Floors.

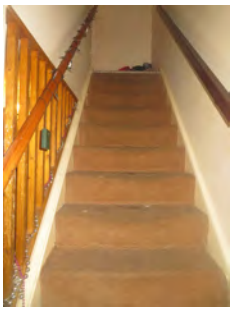
The flats vary in size and some are believed to be duplex in nature, whilst others occupy just a single storey. Flat 21 is accessed at second floor level from the open walkway. A staircase leads from the second floor to the upper floor of the flat.

The floors are believed to be of solid construction, predominantly with load bearing pre-cast concrete floor slabs. In most instances the floor slabs were concealed by timber wearing surfaces and floor coverings and accordingly these could not be inspected in detail.

The floors generally held good alignment and no flexural movement or bounce was recorded. We are satisfied, therefore, that the floors are capable of supporting normally anticipated domestic loadings. Significant remedial works are not therefore expected within the foreseeable future.

The floor coverings within the flat are relatively basic in nature and predominantly consist of laminate floorboarding or carpet. At present the surfaces are serviceable although dirty an aged. Replacement may well be necessary in the near term.

Access between the floors of the flat is gained via a timber staircase. The staircase generally held good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection and, on this basis therefore, we are satisfied that it remains structurally stable.



The carpet to the staircase is loose and potentially dangerous as illustrated below and should be replaced.

10.04 Joinery.

We have reported previously our concerns with regards to the condition of windows and the evident condensation internally, as well as damage and deterioration to security and opening mechanisms. At present the windows remain serviceable; however, improvements are to be anticipated within the near term.

The secondary joinery components such as architraves and skirtings are basic in nature but largely serviceable and significant remedial works are not anticipated over time.

The doors internally within the flats are generally of plain timber formation and in general these are not fire resistant, although it appears fire resistant doors have been incorporated to the kitchen and living room.

Old heating duct work is retained and cupboards locked shut. Removal of the redundant equipment could increase space and storage within the flat.

10.05 Decoration.

The decorations internally within the flat are generally in poor and dirty condition, with evidence of much smoke degraded surfaces. In our opinion, complete redecoration of the property is to be anticipated prior to re-letting in due course.

11.00 SERVICES.

As stated in the preambles to this report we have not tested any of the services, waste, drains or incoming mains to the flat or the property and therefore cannot confirm their nature, condition, extent and adequacy. We have however reported our findings based on our visual observations under the specific headings below to assist your assessment of the installations and the necessity of obtaining further reports if required.

11.01 Electrics.

The electric meter and mains supply were evident within the entrance lobby, close to the entrance, with a fuse board as illustrated below.

The supply is earth bonded, as illustrated below.

The casing to the mains electrical cables is missing and potentially live wires are exposed, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph. Testing of the system by a NICEIC registered contractor is essential and, in our view, this is likely to identify defects and shortcomings which have been permitted to accrue.

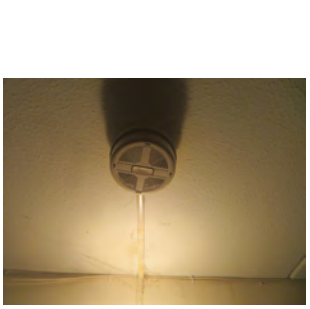
Much of the lighting within the flat appears inoperable, which may be due to defective bulbs but, in our opinion, it is likely that fittings are of poor formation and replacement in this respect is necessary.

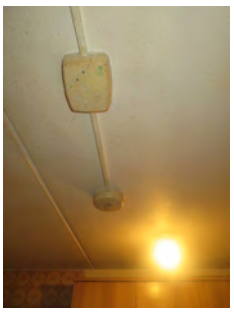
Mechanical extract systems are provided within the bathroom and appear to connect to a communal block installation.

The grilles and the extract system generally are barely operative and extremely dirty, which is allowing moisture vapour to build up within the property, as illustrated below.

We recorded a mechanical extract fan within the kitchen which is acceptable although it should be upgraded in our opinion. The introduction of modern mechanical extract fans is considered essential, in our view, and ideally these should incorporate a humidistat so that moisture laden air is expelled from the property upon generation. This will assist the reduction of condensation within the flat.

The property has a basic smoke detection system as illustrated below. No heat detector was recorded within the kitchen. Accordingly we would recommend that a new fully compliant smoke alarm system is fitted within the flat as soon as possible.





The property has a smoke detection system which appears to incorporate a combined carbon monoxide detector, although we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard. Our recommendation is to upgrade the smoke detection system within the property, so it is fully compliant with current regulations, and incorporate a heat detector within the kitchen.

11.02 Gas.

The gas supply enters the property at which point the supply is metered by a relatively modern meter, as illustrated below.

The meter is earth bonded.

From the meter, copper supply pipework runs generally to serve gas to the various gas-fired appliances, particularly the boiler located within the kitchen. In most instances the copper pipework was concealed from view and could not be inspected in detail and therefore we cannot confirm that the gas supplies remain in good safe serviceable order, as we believe to be the case. Testing of the gas supplies and all gas appliances by a Gas Safe registered contractor is essential prior to future occupation of the property to ensure that it remains in good safe serviceable condition.

11.03 Central Heating.

The property has a traditional central heating system, with an aged unit evident, as illustrated below. In our opinion the boiler is approaching the end of its useful life and replacement must be anticipated in the near term.

Hot water to the central heating system is distributed via pipework run to various radiators located within the flat and illustrated by reference to the following photographs. The system uses small bore pipework and remain serviceable however repairs are to be anticipated within the relative near term.



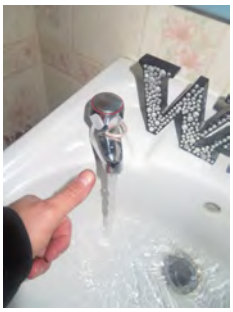
We recorded no particular evidence of defects or leaks to the central heating system, which we anticipate operates adequately. Servicing and overhauling of the system are, however, essential and, in our view, the heat output from a number of the radiators is potentially lower than considered desirable given potential heat loss from the property.

It appears that an old blown air heating system is retained and within the kitchen and other areas we recorded grilles which are indicative of such systems, as illustrated below.


The cupboard containing the old equipment was locked shut and could not be inspected; however, we anticipate that the boiler is retained and its removal could create additional storage space within the flat.

11.04 Hot Water.

Hot water is also provided instantaneously by the boiler and supplied on demand to the various plumbing and sanitary facilities within the flat. Hot water was available under adequate pressure to the sanitary facilities, as illustrated by reference to the following photograph.



The majority of pipework was concealed from view and run within ducts and could not be inspected in detail; however, we recorded no evidence of leaks or other particularly deficiencies within the system. Upgrading and replacement of the pipework in conjunction with refurbishment of the sanitary facilities may well be anticipated but, beyond this, significant remedial works are considered unlikely.

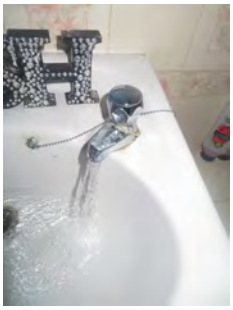
11.05 Cold Water.

The precise point of entry of the cold water main into the building could not be determined but, presumably, this exists within the communal service risers at ground floor level. The supply then runs to serve the various flats within the building, and Flat 21 in particular. All cold water supplies are believed to be directly from the main; however, we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard.

Copper sections were recorded as illustrated below. These remain serviceable but are aged and replacement of the pipework must be anticipated within the foreseeable future.

The majority of pipework was concealed from view and could not be inspected in detail; however, we recorded no evidence of leaks or particular defects. Replacement of the supply pipework may well be anticipated in conjunction with the renewal of the sanitary facilities.

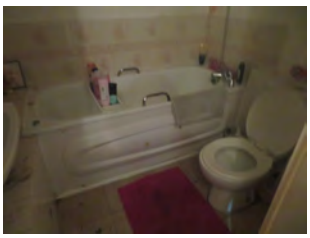
Cold water was generally available under good pressure as illustrated below.



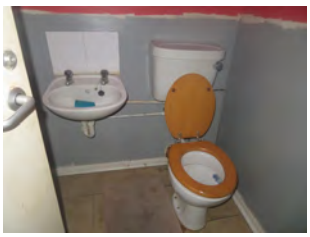
11.06 Sanitary Facilities.

The kitchen to the property is illustrated by reference to the following photograph. Replacement of the kitchen, whilst not essential, is strongly recommended and works of this nature should be undertaken in the relatively near term.

The bathroom to the flat is adequate and remains in fair serviceable order, as illustrated below. Replacement of the bathroom, whilst not essential, is strongly recommended and works of this nature should be undertaken in the relatively near term.

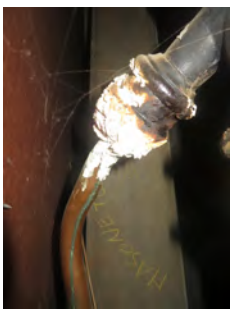


A toilet was also evident as illustrated below but it was difficult to inspect in detail as again the lighting was inoperative. Upgrading is not essential at this time but should be anticipated within the near term.



11.07 Drainage.

Drainage from the plumbing and sanitary facilities generally runs via uPVC pipework. The pipework is a combination of more recent and older sections and, we believe, runs to the main communal soil stack, although this is concealed within duct work. The soil stack is generally of cast iron formation, we believe, in keeping with buildings of this age and nature. There is evidence of leaks from sections of the drainage pipework, which have been persistent and longstanding, as illustrated below. Repairs and replacement of aged cast iron and copper pipework are to be anticipated as part of further renovation and refurbishment of the property.



There is evidence that certain of the sanitary facilities regularly become blocked and it is likely that the drainage installation serving the flat is in poor order and similar issues may exist generally throughout the block.

Given the age of the property, it is likely that significant limescale build up is obstructing the main soil runs and upgrading and renovation of these is to be anticipated. Leaks to the cast iron pipework may also be expected on a regular basis, as well as other defects which presumaby do occur within flats to the building. Improvements, therefore, to the drainage facilities are to be anticipated.

The main soil stacks, we believe, discharge directly into the underground drainage installation and many inspection chambers were recorded during the course of our survey. The majority of the inspection chambers were heavy duty covers that could not be lifted; however, where possible, lids were removed to reveal the underground drainage installation to be of vitreous clay formation, in keeping with buildings of this age and nature, as illustrated by reference to the following photographs.


The photographs illustrate a build up of limescale within the pipework and descaling and cleaning of the underground drainage installation is strongly recommended and should be undertaken on a regular basis.

The vitreous clay drainage pipework appears to remain in good free flowing condition, based on our limited inspection, and we anticipate that significant defects are not evident, although we cannot confirm our suspicions. Copies of detailed drainage searches should be provided by your solicitor and, in addition, you may also consider it prudent to appoint a specialist contractor to carry out a CCTV survey of the underground drainage installation so that its extent and overall condition can be fully determined. Cleaning and regular maintenance of the drainage systems are require and in general these appear to remain serviceable, although prone to blockage and presumably leaks to pipes from time to time.

12.00 SUMMARY.

xxxx, we believe, is a box of flats constructed in the late 1960s or early 1970s and consists predominantly of pre-cast concrete components. The building generally holds good alignment with little evidence of any undue movement or deflection and, on this basis therefore, we are satisfied that it remains structurally stable. Much of the structure was concealed from view by the recent addition of external thermal insulation over boarding the original concrete cladding panels. We have advised of potential defects and risks pertaining to pre-cast concrete buildings of this type, age and nature. Given that much of the structure was concealed from view, we cannot comment further on these elements.

We recorded no evidence of subsidence and believe the building is free from this defect. We cannot rule out the potential development of subsidence in the future; however, there is no evidence of this existing previously. It is imperative that the building owner maintains suitable building insurance with appropriate levels of subsidence cover in the unlikely event of the development of this defect.

The alterations which have been carried out have improved the overall energy efficiency of the building, although the design and implementation of much of the thermal insulation is poor and sections have not been upgraded, particularly at ground floor level. The insulation levels also to external walkways and exposed soffits are far from compliant with current regulations, which is likely to result in condensation in certain circumstances internally within the flat and such defects were identified. Further remedial works are, therefore, to be expected.

The overall external condition of the building remains fair; however, we must reconfirm that we were unable to gain access onto the roof and have not assessed any of the high level components or elements of the building. We recorded no evidence which would indicate ongoing leaks to the property, although our inspection was extremely limited in this regard. Recovering of the main flat roof may be anticipated and we have advised that the walkway asphalt membrane at first floor level is also deteriorating and we believe leaks are occurring into some flats at this time.

The maintenance to the building is adequate; however, significant remedial works have not been carried out and reparation of defects and improved maintenance is strongly recommended, in our view.

Replacement windows have been introduced, which are generally of double glazed formation. These are a little aged and far from compliant with current standards and their energy efficiency is limited as a consequence. There is evidence of condensation internally to the windows and frames within Flat 8. In our opinion, replacement of the double glazed windows must be anticipated within the relatively near term.

Internally, the flat remains in fair condition; however, it is dirty and a little dilapidated. Redecoration and upgrading of internal finishes are to be considered and improvements to the energy efficiency of the flat are recommended. Renewal of sanitary facilities must also be anticipated in due course although at present these remain serviceable.

The fire precautions and means of escape facilities within the block are based on a stay put policy. It is essential as part of any stay put policy that suitable fire separation is achieved between individual units. We recorded no evident major breaches of fire separation; however, holes have been drilled through compartmentation walls without adequate fire stopping, certainly to external walls in various areas of the building, and we cannot confirm therefore that suitable fire separation exists between the various units. Egress from individual flats is likely in the event of a fire as a consequence of the duplex nature and the exposed open walkways at first floor level.

We have advised that there is a potential for the insulation which has been attached to the building to be flammable, although we cannot confirm our suspicions in this regard as it is generally concealed from view. The height of the building is such that this may not require replacement, but in due course the introduction of non-flammable insulation as part of further renovations and upgrading to the energy efficiency of the building must be contemplated.

We trust that the above provides the information which you require to consider the leasehold purchase of the property. If however we can be of any further assistance, or you wish to discuss the content of this report, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

This report was prepared by Andrew Moulsdale BSc FRICS, Director of BS Initiative Limited.

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