

JOB REF: XXXXX

# **SPECIFIC DEFECTS REPORT**

**Relating to dampness and noise transfer within  
the ground floor flat  
XXXX Plaistow, London E13 XXX**



FOR

**Mr X**

Prepared by:

**XXXX**

**INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS**

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## **INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION**

We have been instructed by Mr X on XXXX to prepare a report on the dampness and noise transfer within the ground floor flat XXXX Plaistow, London E13 XXX

We have carried out a visual inspection of the property on XXXX

The weather was sunny at the time of the inspection.

The instructions have been carried out under our standard terms and conditions, which are available on our website and were forwarded to you prior to our confirmation of instruction.

## **SYNOPSIS**

Thank you for providing us with a brief explaining the issues and an acquaintance to guide us around the property. We will be more than happy to discuss the problems in more detail once you have had the benefit of reading this report. We have used the brief as the basis to work upon, a copy of which is in the Appendices A at the end of the report.

We have inspected the problems in the:-

Hallway  
Floorboards and floors  
Bathroom  
Bedroom  
Exterior walls

We have duly investigated these and advised within the report.

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## CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

### External

Chimneys	Brick chimney and parapet wall
Roof	Main roof pitched and clad in concrete tiles
Gutter and downpipes	Plastic
Walls	Flemish bond construction (assumed) repointed in cement mortar to the front and render in cement mortar to the rear
External joinery	Double glazed plastic windows

### Internal

Ceilings	Originally lath and plaster probably replaced with gypsum plaster (assumed)
Internal walls	Originally lime plaster replaced in some areas with gypsum plaster (assumed) for example in the bathroom and kitchen
Floors	Ground floor suspended timber floor system (assumed)

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

Please note we have only seen the ground floor flat.

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Executive summaries are always “dangerous” as they try and encapsulate relatively complex problems in a few precise and succinct words. Having said that here is our executive summary and recommendations:

## **CAUSE AND EFFECT**

Please read the report in full and then contact us to discuss further.

The matters raised in your brief related mainly to the effects of the problems.

Within this report we have established the main causes however it should be noted that in older properties sometimes property problems are a combination of different issues.

### **1. CONDENSATION**

The property is suffering badly from condensation we believe this is due to the high moisture creating areas of the kitchen and bathroom not having extract fans and not being ventilated suitably.

### **ACTION REQUIRED**

We would recommend extraction fans with humidity thermostats are added in the kitchen and bathroom initially you may also need to add additional ventilation to some of the other rooms.

Humidity Thermostats defined:

These are thermostats on the extraction fans that switch on when the air reaches a certain humidity thereby helping to reduce the moist air that causes condensation.

We would also recommend you move the radiators to underneath the windows as this creates air circulation as when heat rises it contacts the cold air adjacent to the window and causes air circulation around the room this is why radiators are traditionally put underneath windows and where we see internal radiators it is generally for cheapness and convenience for the plumber.

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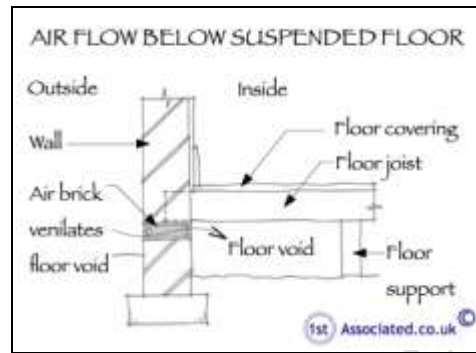
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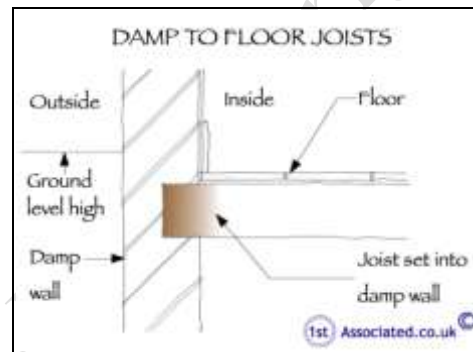
## 2. RISING DAMP

There is rising damp in the property which is common in many properties of this age however this can be reduced by ensuring there is airflow underneath the floor via the airbricks. This property has a suspended timber floor (which you can see in the first sketch) so you need to ensure there is an airflow from the front to the rear of the property (as you can see in the second sketch).

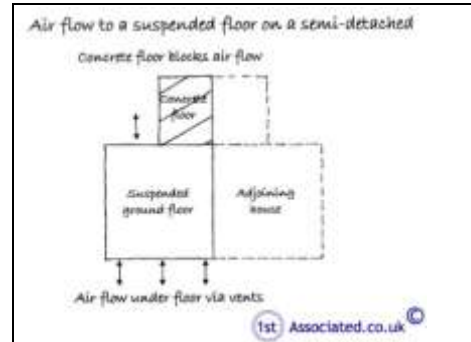
Given the condition the property is now in you will need to replace timbers particularly embedded timbers that have rotted over the years the repair and replacement of the timbers should only be carried out once an air flow has been established from the front to the rear of the property.



Air flow below suspended floor



Damp to floor joists



Air flow to a suspended floor on a semi detached

## MIXTURE OF OLD AND NEW MATERIALS CAUSING PROBLEMS INTERNAL

There is dampness evident in the bathroom where the original lime based plaster has been replaced with a gypsum plaster. Whilst the majority of the problem relates to the bathroom not having an extract fan it should also be noted that gypsum plasters do not cope with dampness very well that is why they should

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mainly be used in modern properties. Lime based plaster would be far better used internally just as lime based mortar is far better used externally within this property. Another example would be the windows you have do not have any trickle vents so there is no air circulation in the property.

#### Trickle Vents Defined

Small vents to the windows to allow air movement inside the property to stop a build up of fumes or humidity.

#### **EXTERNAL**

Problems being caused by the lack of window sills to the property which allow additional water discharge down the render which we think is actually coming through and there may also be leaking guttering and pipes from above. We have discussed maintenance issues relating to it in the main body of the report.

#### **ACTION REQUIRED**

You need to add window sills to the windows and also make sure the render is water tight. (Ideally the cement render should be replaced with a more appropriate render lime based for this age of property however we appreciate this would be a high cost).

To conclude we would therefore comment the property needs to be allowed to breathe again by adding extract fans and air ventilations and circulation throughout and where necessary improving details and changing for the most appropriate material.

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## Time Line – A brief history of the structure

1880's – 1900's	Property built
1940's – 1950's	Electricity added
1970's – 1990's	Central heating added
1970's – 1990's	Double glazed windows added
1960's - 2010	Gypsum plaster added

As we have not had the benefit of discussing the property with you the above is a typical timeline for this age of property.

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# INSPECTION

Our inspection has been specifically related to XXXX Plaistow, London E13 XXX and is related to dampness and noise transfer within the ground floor flat.

We have carried out a visual inspection:-

External visual inspection

Internal visual inspection

No access has been gained to the upstairs flat.

Tests have been taken with a Gann electric resistance meter.

Electric resistance damp meter readings have been taken typically we would expect readings in the region of 30-40 we have found readings in the region of double to triple that.

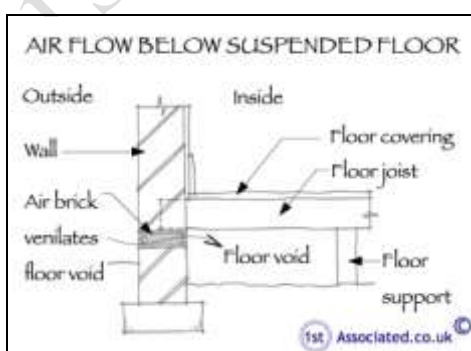
## SURVEY FINDINGS

We have followed the format set out within your brief.

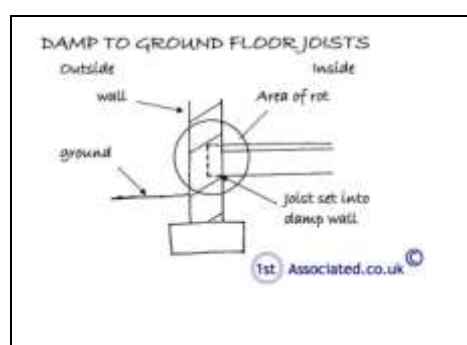
### 1. Hallway

We believe problems relate due to a lack of ventilation under the floor of the property and lack of air movement in the property in general which has resulted in dampness getting into the floor timbers (this is not just within the hallway but it is throughout the entirety of the ground floor of the property).

As is shown in the sketches below with this age of property it is likely to be a suspended timber floor with embedded floor timbers.



Air flow beneath suspended floor



Damp to ground floor joists

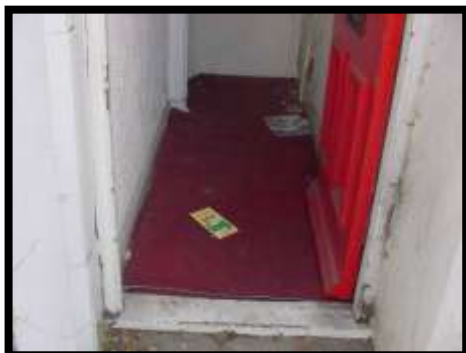
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Unfortunately repairs have been made in modern gypsum plaster which has compounded the problem as modern gypsum plaster cannot cope very well with dampness.



Shared entrance Hallway



High damp meter readings in the hallway

## AC

**TION REQUIRED:** You will need to clear and open up the air vents to the outside of the property and ensure there is no air flow underneath the whole of the floor of the property. Once this has been carried out you will then need to replace the deteriorated timbers and we would also recommend that the plaster is removed and replastered as it will be contaminated with hygroscopic salts (salts that attract moisture) and ideally it should be replastered in a lime based plaster (we are aware that many builders will not want to do this because it is hard) but lime based plasters will dissipate any dampness in the structure.



Air brick

## 2. Floorboards and floors at Flat above at XXXX

Noise in this age of property is a common problem as it was converted prior to there being a building regulation requirement to insulate for noise and thermal efficiency and fire. The type of work that is now required is to insulate between the floor joists. In addition to this, creaking floorboards tend to occur once or after a central heating system is put in place and poorly fitted laminate flooring. When DIYers have fitted floors we find a very common problem with noise transfer particularly if the laminated flooring has been put down without any sound deadening under layer.

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**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that you get to know the upper neighbours. We suggest you have what we would term a 'cup of tea meeting' to explain the problems with the sounds that you are having. We have come across this in the past where the simplest solution is to buy or together with screwing down the joists or floorboard sheets.

This is a very good compromise instead of the more expensive correct solution which would be to move the floorboards/floorboard sheets and put insulation between them, this is both expensive and time consuming and inconvenient to everyone concerned and may even involve people in the upper flat moving out for a while.

The costs are likely to be in the many thousands for the latter and therefore the benefit of buying new carpet and a good quality underlay is that the cost is relatively small and can be carried out on a room by room basis dependent upon where you are being affected. Problems may occur if the existing tenants/owners change ownership upstairs and the new occupant went back to laminated flooring and this is when the benefit of insulation (remembering it is for thermal, noise and fire) would be of full benefit.

#### Building Regulations defined

Building Regulations are a law requirement to give a minimum standard of building as administrated by the Local Authority via their building surveyors within the building control department.

### **3. Maintenance**

(We have added this section as it seemed an appropriate place to talk about this.)

The person that showed us around advised that there had been a problem with lack of maintenance. This is also mentioned within the floorboards and floors at flat above at 167B section of your brief. They advised that the upper stairs flat was let as a tenanted property typically this is let under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), which should mean the owner carries out the maintenance in the above property. It depends upon the type of lease who carries out the maintenance on the property as a whole as we have not had the benefit of seeing a lease we cannot comment further.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend that you show a copy of this report to other people occupying this property and/or who have ownership of it as they may have a shared liability with regard to external elements in particular such as the drains, foundations, floors, walls, roof, chimneys etc, etc. We would be more than happy to look at a copy of the lease, if you so wish, it may also be worth having a solicitor interpret the contents. We would expect in a well managed property that there would be a

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maintenance fund, often known as a sinking fund (saving fund), for any problems with the property both long term major issues and reactive maintenance day to day issues.

#### **4. Bathroom**

Dampness was noted within the bathroom. This looks to be caused from lack of ventilation, which is affecting the modern gypsum plaster. As we have not met you we are unable to discuss or confirm the frequency of use.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend the installation of a humidity controlled mechanical extract fan of 150mm diameter.

Gypsum plaster to the bathroom

#### **5. Ground Floor Bedroom**

The ceiling leaks looks to relate to leaking pipe works from the upper flat. Typically this would be drainage runs from showers and sink/WC wastes which get blocked . Unfortunately without gaining access to the upstairs flat we cannot comment further.

The mould we can see to the bedroom walls is typical of what we see with condensation. The condensation we believe is being drawn from high humidity areas such as the kitchen and bathroom to the relatively cold areas such as the bedroom in this property.

We would relate this back to our comments on the bathroom. We feel that if a mechanical extract fan is added in the bathroom and kitchen this should reduce the dampness in these areas but you do need to put some background heating on as old properties have cold areas (known as cold bridging) which does draw condensation.

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**Mould to the corners of the bedroom**

## **6. External Walls**

Unfortunately we were not exactly sure what you meant by your comments and we were not able to work these things out with your colleague who was at the property, please contact us to discuss this further.

## **7. Dampness**

You are living in a Victorian property that has been converted and with this type of property you need to expect some dampness as an older style building is quite differently built to a modern building although from what we have seen this is excessive.

Dampness generally comes in three forms; rising damp which rises from the ground, lateral penetrating damp which comes through the walls and condensation which is caused due to the high humidity content of water within the air coming in contact with cold surfaces. We consider in this case the main cause of the dampness to be high humidity within the bathroom and possibly the kitchen both of which do not have any external ventilation from the form of mechanical extract fans.

For example we could not see any windows that open properly in the kitchen, albeit you could open the back door, but we would recommend a humidity stat operated extract fan of 150mm in diameter and in addition in the kitchen we would recommend an extract hood over the cooker.

Older properties needs to 'breathe' by this we mean that they take in dampness but they also allow to dissipate.

Many things have been done to stop this property from breathing (normally modern materials) therefore meaning that the dampness that builds naturally cannot naturally dissipate (go away), this ranges from the blocked airbricks/missing airbricks/airbricks not being big enough. Make sure the

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required increase of the size of the airbricks allows a through flow of air underneath the floor, to the windows not having trickle vents.

Original floorboards which would have allowed some airflow through the property but unfortunately these have been covered over by plywood etc and the modern chipboards and plaster on the walls simply cannot cope with the amount of dampness in the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would need to discuss the matters with you to understand where the liabilities are with regard to the various problems in the property.

Other things that do not help with air circulation are things such as internal radiators which do not allow circulation of air as well as radiators being located underneath the windows (if located underneath the windows the heat rises and then circulates around the room as it hits the cold air from the window).

Externally the property has cement based rendered walls which are not ideal as they do not allow the property to breathe or move and adapt with this age of property. As mentioned elsewhere within this report ideally this should be replaced in a lime mortar based render however we appreciate that this would be very costly work so we would focus our efforts externally on the window sills where the sills are missing on some of the windows and allowing any rainwater to soak into the render below we believe therefore causing lateral or penetrating dampness.

**The dampness is caused not by one single thing but a combination of of many issues.**

So as you can see there are various issues and combined causes for all of these dampness problems. We would also add if preferred you should carry out the work in stages and steps as you then see the effect of carrying out various bits and pieces of the work and when you have to spend any more money.

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## **SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION**

To summarise we would recommend the following:-

### Stage One

Humidity controlled mechanical extract fans of 150mm in diameter to be added into the bathroom and the kitchen, in addition the kitchen to have an extract hood discharging to outside air.

Open up the airbricks and put larger airbricks in to at least double the size of the existing bricks (making sure the holes in the airbricks are big).

Unfortunately the airbricks will have limited effects due to the plywood and chipboard that has been covered over the floorboards may have to put running vents in at the skirtings to allow an airflow under the property and through the property. So we would therefore recommend where the floor needs replacing, for example in the hallway, that it is replaced with floorboards that allow an airflow both underneath and through it. We would then wait and see what dampness then occurs.

### Stage Two

We would be looking at having the internal radiators moved to positioning under the windows adding window sills as well as double checking that the gutters and downpipes are water tight. As well as looking at your lifestyle, as we did not have the benefit of having a discussion with you, as we would normally do, to discuss such things as the type of cooking you carry out, how your clothes are dried for example it is best to dry outside rather than inside but we do understand this is not always practical.

If you would like any further advice on any of the issues discussed or indeed any that have not been discussed! Please do not hesitate to contact me directly on

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# **LIMITATIONS**

## **Specific Defects Report**

### **1. Conditions of Engagement**

Please note: references to the masculine include, where appropriate, the feminine.

Subject to express agreement to the contrary (which in this particular case has been none) and any agreed amendments/additions (of which in this particular case there have been none), the terms on which the Surveyor will undertake the Specific Defects Report are set out below.

Based upon a visual inspection as defined below the Surveyor will advise the Client by means of a written report as to his opinion of the visible condition and state of repair of the specific problem or problems only.

### **2. The Inspection**

#### **a) Accessibility and Voids**

The Surveyor will base this report on a visual inspection and accordingly its scope is limited. It does not include an inspection of those areas, which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible. Our visual inspection will relate to the specific defects shown to us only.

#### **b) Floors**

We have not opened up the floor structure. We have only carried out a visual inspection and any conclusions will be based upon our best assumptions. We can open up the floor if so required at an extra fee.

#### **c) Roofs**

The Surveyor has not inspected the roofs in this instance due to no access.

#### **d) Boundaries, Grounds and Outbuildings**

The inspection will not include boundaries, grounds and outbuildings unless specifically stated (none stated).

#### **e) Services**

No services inspected.

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f) Areas not inspected

The Surveyor will have only inspected those areas identified within the report. His report will be based upon possible or probable defects based upon what he has seen together with his knowledge of that type of structure. If you feel that any further areas need inspection then please advise us immediately.

g) Specific Defects Report

As this is a report upon a Specific Defect we do not offer any comment or guidance upon reactive maintenance and/or planned or routine maintenance items.

h) Whilst we have used reasonable skill and care in preparing this report, it should be appreciated that the Chartered Surveyors cannot offer any guarantee that the property will be free from future defects or that existing defects will not suffer from further deterioration;

**3. Deleterious and Hazardous materials**

- a) Unless otherwise expressly stated in the Report, the Surveyor will assume that no deleterious or hazardous materials or techniques have been used in the construction of the property. However the Surveyor will advise in the report if in his view there is a likelihood that high alumina cement (HAC) concrete has been used in the construction and that in such cases specific enquiries should be made or tests carried out by a specialist.

**4. Contamination**

The Surveyor will not comment upon the existence of contamination as this can only be established by appropriate specialists. Where, from his local knowledge or the inspection he considers that contamination might be a problem he should advise as to the importance of obtaining a report from an appropriate specialist.

**5. Consents, Approvals and Searches**

- a) The Surveyor will assume that the property is not subject to any unusual or especially onerous restrictions or covenants which apply to the structure or affect the reasonable enjoyment of the property.
- b) The Surveyor will assume that all bye-laws, Building Regulations and other consents required have been obtained. In the case of new buildings and alterations and extensions, which require statutory consents or approval the Surveyor will not verify whether, such consents have been obtained. Any enquiries should be made by the Client or his legal advisers.

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Drawings and specifications will not be inspected by the Surveyor. It is the Clients responsibility to forward any drawings and specifications that he has or knows the whereabouts of to us to include information in our report. If these are not forthcoming we will make our best assumptions based upon the information available.

- c) The Surveyor will assume that the property is unaffected by any matters which would be revealed by a Local Search and replies to the usual enquiries or by a Statutory Notice and that neither the property nor its condition its use or intended use is or will be unlawful.

## 6. Fees and Expenses

The Client will pay the Surveyor the agreed fee for the Report and any expressly agreed disbursements in addition.

## 7. Restrictions on Disclosures

- a) This report is for the sole use of the Client in connection with the property and is limited to the current brief. No responsibility is accepted by the Chartered Surveyors if used outside these terms.
- b) Should any disputes arise they will be dealt with and settled under English law;
- c) This report does not fall under the Third Parties Rights Act.

## 8. Safe Working Practices

The Surveyor will follow the guidance given in Surveying Safely issued by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

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# APPENDIX 1

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To 1st Associated Surveyors

Back... stow, E13 0HA for 25.05

The... present it to the freeholder to require repairs to be carried out. The issues concerning the disrepair report are as follows.

**Hallway**  
Cause of damage to structure under... way causing floor to sink below level of skirting board and... wall in shared hallway to crumble. Damp extending to dusty... of under stairs cupboard at end of hallway and to the right (before...)

**Floorboards and Floors at flat above**  
Disrepair of floorboards which are... creaking loudly and poorly... laminate flooring, tiles and carpet on all floors and in... every room at flat above (i.e. 167B Grange Road... proofing between the floor of the first floor... and floor flat at 167A Grange Road... music, gaming noises and...)

Disrepair... from previously blocked and overflowing... and December 2009 and water from... roof at 167B Grange Road down to back bedroom... Grange Road.

The... that above have never asked for access to back garden to clean gutters. Both front and back gutters were cleared... this year which had to be vacuumed and I was advised that the... gutter at the flat above had come loose and the gutter was sitting... flowing gutter was tipping water directly behind rendering (see... directly above the back door).

**Bathroom**  
Damp and blown plaster on the inside... of the bathroom and windowsill and bulging of plaster... above taps on bath. Water... puckering of plaster on ceiling directly above the outer...

**Bedroom**  
Water damage and cracking of plaster... bedroom. Hairline crack down... damage to... on ceiling above... Damp and black mould... window to the left. Water damage to floor below...

Water... mould at wall to far wall at back of bedroom starting from above... spreading downwards and outwards on right and left side of double windows looking directly onto garden.

**Exterior walls**

Ground Floor flat Ground Floor flat Ground Floor flat

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Exterior walls to bathroom and back bedroom. If wall to the exterior of the bathroom looked at please see trail of water damage shown as green mould flowing from gutter at the top of rendered wall near gutter as soon as you come out of back door in kitchen and water damages to rendering behind two down pipes after the bathroom window and bedroom windows on the same side of the wall as the bathroom window.

Many thanks

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