EXCEL BUILDING SURVEYORS
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SAMPLE BUILDING SURVEY REPORT

OF:

SAMPLE PROPERTY

Scope and Limitations of Inspection / Report

The inspection took the form of a superficial survey of the main structure, including roofs, walls and finishes, both internally and externally. Where parts of the structure were unexposed or inaccessible no opinion can be given as to their condition. No opening up works was carried out during our inspection, nor were carpets or floor coverings lifted. It must be appreciated therefore that defects, such as woodworm or dry rot may be present without our knowledge. No tests were carried out on the electrical, plumbing, heating or drainage installations, but we have commented on our general observations. No tests for land contamination or radon gas were carried out under the scope of this survey.

In addition the review of any statutory consents such as planning permissions etc. do not form part of this report.The exterior of the property was viewed from ground level only.

Use of Report

This report was prepared on the instructions of our client (CLIENT NAME). The report is issued for the sole use of the client and no responsibility is accepted to any third party or in the event that this report is used for any other purpose.

Weather Conditions

Weather conditions on the day of inspection were dry and cloudy.

Building Surveyor

EXCEL BUILDING SURVEYORS

Date of Inspection

INSERT DATE

Introduction

The property comprises a semi detached two storey, three bedroom dwelling, with parking areas to the front, a side entrance gate and rear garden.

The accommodation includes a kitchen / dining room and living room at ground floor. First floor contains the main bathroom, hot-press, landing and bedrooms.

The building includes typical features such as oil fired central heating, hot water and cold water storage, fitted kitchen and wardrobes etc.

In general the house is in good structural and decorative order. It would appear the building was constructed prior to the introduction of the building control act 1990 and the subsequent building regulations do not apply.

Roof & Attic

The roof is a typical 'A' frame shape, with concrete profiled roof and ridge tiles. The tiles are laid on timber fixing battens and also over a traditional bitumen type sarking felt, which acts as a secondary waterproof layer.
The main structure consists of a prefabricated timber truss, fixed together with factory installed metal fixing plates. This in turn is typically fitted to a timber wall plate and fixed to the walls with metal holding down straps, although all of these were obscured / covered at the time of inspection. The trusses are also secured together with timber cross bracing members and these are in good order.

Chimney

The dwelling is provided with 1 No. chimney stack which is shared with the adjoining neighbour. At roof level the chimney stack comprises a concrete block construction, with a 'roughcast' render finish externally, with a lead flashing arrangement at the junction with the roof tiles and a standard concrete chimney cap, and terracotta chimney pot.
The chimney stack appears in good functional condition and free from leaks. It would be useful to have the chimney swept through as part of routine maintenance, and consider adding a cowl to the chimney pot to prevent birds nesting.

The roof features an overhanging eaves detail at front and rear, and this includes a PVC material to the fascia and soffit. It should be noted that this is a covering material, originally the houses in this estate were provided with timber fascia and soffit material and this can be seen on the rear of the adjoining dwelling. The gable wall is also provided with an overhanging barge detail, with the same finishes as the eaves.

The attic is provided with a good layer of thermal insulating material known as glass wool, and this has been laid in several layers across the attic space, approximately 200mm thick (although

this varies). It is notable that the wool materials have been stuffed into the eaves, and this is likely to reduce the potential for air from outside to ventilate the attic space.You might consider installing some vents in the soffit portion of the eaves and ensuring that these allow air into the attic. Some of the thermal insulation in the attic may have to be moved aside at the vents to ensure air flow is created.

Party Wall

No. 189 is provided with a concrete blockwork separating / party wall with the adjoining dwelling. This wall is built up through the attic to join the underside of the external roof covering and appears to be mainly in good order.

However, the detail of the party wall junction at the roof felt and timber battens supporting the external roof tiles appears to have been altered previously. Ideally a non-combustible layer of rockwool (or a similar material) would be fitted between the top of the wall and the roofing layers above. The foam materials in this location are unlikely to meet any fire proof standard. Please note any alterations to a party wall would require the agreement of the adjoining neighbour.

Notwithstanding this there is limited access within the attic and maneuvering over the glass wool thermal insulation and prefabricated truss are difficult, you may choose to leave the party wall details as they are generally in good order, especially compared to other houses of this generation.

Rainwater gutters and downpipes

The building is fitted with PVC moulded and profiled gutter and supporting brackets. It should be noted that the rainwater downpipes from the gutters are all contained within the adjoining neighbours property.
Moreover , the gutters at 189 and the adjoining building both require cleaning and maintenance.

There is no downpipe to the rear gutter and this is poorly connected to the gutter of the adjoining house. Leaks are apparent in this area. You might consider a few options to improve this, such as

(1) requesting the neighbour to allow an improved connection with new gutters and downpipes on their side of the property.

(2) provide a new downpipe on your property connected to the gutter and drained to a suitable soakaway.

Walls

The external walls comprise a number of components. The front external elevation is provided with a traditional brick finish and mortar pointing, and the brick constructed in a stretcher bond pattern. It would appear that the brick work is connected to a 215mm concrete hollow block internal leaf, and we expect this is fixed with galvanised wall ties (no opening up works carried out to confirm). Traditionally this type of wall structure only contains a very shallow cavity space between the brickwork outer layer and the blockwork inner leaf, rendering the space in between unsuitable for placement of thermal insulation.

The current owner has mentioned that the front external wall has been provided with 'pumped' thermal insulation, However given the nature of the wall structure which is likely to have a restricted cavity (if any) it is unlikely any insulation in this location would be of significant benefit.

The side gable wall and rear wall are constructed from a 215mm thick concrete hollow block and this is provided with a 'rough cast' external render finish, and the majority of this was found to be in good order.
Some minor damage is noted to the render finish at the junction of brickwork and roughcast render to the gable wall, some repair works will be required here in future.
Minor cracks are noted in isolated locations to gable end (under bathroom window) and front wall, none of which appear to have structural significance.
In addition a poor repair / sealant is noted to ground floor kitchen in the current bin space. Expanding foam has been roughly installed here and you might consider replacing it with concrete brick externally and re-rendering.

The owner / agent have noted that a number of the rooms (but not all) in the dwelling have been provided with a dry-lining layer including added thermal insulation.The level of thermal insulation to the walls is likely to be of a low standard by comparison to modern regulations. Although, this is typical of building this age and nature and given the size the building may be easily heated.
There is no significant evidence of mould growth in the various rooms. Depending on your renovation or upgrade plans you might investigate the level of insulation further. There are grants available for such home improvements and this could be investigated further through the sustainable energy authority of Ireland (SEAI) as terms and conditions will apply.

Windows and external doors

The external windows have UPVC frames with double glazing and casement style openings with cockspur type handles. Those were found to be in generally good condition.

The casement opening sections of windows in the first floor rooms have not been fitted with

restrictors. This could cause a potential hazard for young children in particular in the bathroom.

The front door is relatively modern and has been fitted in recent years.There is minor damage to the concrete / mortar finish under the front door, but this is not causing any negative issues. The rear door is older type but still entirely functional.

The window sill at ground floor rear sitting room is in poor condition due to oxidation of steel reinforcement, causing the concrete to crack and break. This should be repaired or replaced.

There is a large rise to the rear step which could be difficult for older adults and young children to use, especially those not familiar with the property.

Floors

The ground floor appears to be of solid concrete type construction and is generally level and even. The floor is finished with a wooden floor imitation ceramic tile, and this is likely to be a modern finish.

The first floor level comprises of a suspended timber construction (no opening up works were carried out) and is in good condition. We would expect that a floor of this type includes timber floor joists spanning from external walls and maybe load bearing on the internal partition wall between kitchen and sitting room.

This is overlaid with a plywood / chipboard flooring, as noted in the hotpress. The upstairs rooms are in turn fitted with a mixture of floor coverings including a carpet, ceramic tiles and wood flooring. However, a number of the doors are stiff to close due to rubbing on the carpet and tile floor finishes.

Internal Doors & Joinery

Doors in the building comprise of a solid leaf with moulded and profiled panel detailing. The doors are finished with paint and varnish and include standard butt hinges and brass type handles and locks.

Several of the doors at first floor level appear to be sticking on the ceramic tile and carpet floor finish, in particular the hot press door, master-bedroom and bathroom. The base of the hotpress door is in poor order.

The skirting and architrave comprises a mixture of softwood type moulded profiles, are a primarily paint finished. We note that some of the skirtings have been removed previously, jointed and poorly refitted in a number of locations. However such defects can be fixed easily.

Internal walls, Partitions & Ceilings

The partitions on the first floor are relatively thin (approx 70mm), this would likely consist of a layer of plasterboard fixed to each side of a 50mm timber stud construction. This thin profile could allow readily for sound transfer between rooms.

The partition wall at ground floor level is a thicker section, likely to be 100mm thick concrete block and is likely to provide load bearing capacity to support the floor above.

The ceilings are in relatively good order with the exception of some exposed holes and uneven plaster finishes where light fittings have been removed or altered.

Fixtures, Fittings and furniture

The bathroom has been modernized in recent years, this is in good order. It includes standard ceramic W.C. with a cistern and pan arrangement, the wash hand basin comprises similar materials, and chrome tap.

There is a power shower fitted over the bath and this is provided with a glazed shower screen. However the light fitting over the bathroom mirror does not appear to be working.

The kitchen cupboards and fitted wardrobes are made from standard manufactured timber frames, doors and counter tops and these are in good order. Although, you may wish to upgrade individual kitchen appliances to suit your needs.

Stairs

The stairs comprise of a timber construction, with a closed string detail, this also includes a profiled balustrade / guardian to the side. This guarding supports a timber handrail along the flight of the stairs and at landing level. The stairs are generally in good condition.

However, it should be noted that the spacing between the balustrades at landing level is in-excess of 140mm in several locations. This could pose a health and safety hazard for very young children.

Foul and Storm Water Drainage

The foul wastewater pipework appears to comprise PVC type materials. The foul water drain pipe from the bathroom to the external sewer connection has been changed recently and this is in good order.

There is some evidence of grease build-up in the external gully connecting to the kitchen sink. As part of routine maintenance, this should be checked occasionally to prevent blockages.

The inspection chamber to the main sewer was free from blockages at the time of inspection.

As part of annual maintenance, it would be recommended to open and check this chamber.

As noted above, stormwater discharges through the gutters and downpipes to the attached dwelling on the right side.

Services

Electrical Installations

The electrical installation includes a standard mains consumer meter on the external gable wall, and the mains distribution board is situated internally in the cupboard at high level near the front door. The distribution board includes a number of miniature circuit breakers (MCBs) and mains switch and these are labelled to identify the fittings controlled by each. The level of lights, electrical sockets and switches are of similar standard for a dwelling of this age.

The building is fitted with a Burglar alarm and the main control board fitted in the hotpress. It should be noted that the alarm was not checked, and only registered installers are permitted to carry out service and repair works on such systems.

Plumbing and heating

The property is serviced with a mains water supply, and the meter / stopcock is contained in the footpath at the driveway.

The oil fired central heating and oil storage tank were found to be in working order at the time of inspection, the heat is distributed through a series of steel radiators.There is a modern heating control panel located in the sitting room.

The copper hot water cylinder appears adequate for the size of the dwelling and is fitted in the hot press as standard for most dwellings.The building is also fitted with a back boiler within the fireplace in the sitting room and this provides a secondary source of heating (no tests were conducted). It should be noted that an open fire is much less efficient as a source of heating by comparison to the oil heating, or even an enclosed stove.

As part of standard maintenance we recommend servicing the oil fired boiler and back boiler in the solid fuel fireplace.

The circulating pipework for the central heating includes steel ‘gun barrel’ and copper materials. Gun barrel pipes are very prone to corrosion damage resulting in leaks especially in a ground floor situation. It would appear that the radiators at ground level are connected to copper pipes and it is likely the gun barrel pipes may have been replaced in previous years. Perhaps only a small amount of gun barrel pipe is retained on the 1st floor.

The PVC cold water storage tank is located in the attic. Unusually this is used to support a fabricated metal expansion tank on two small pieces of timber. Both tanks are poorly supported and ideally this situation should be improved. In particular, the smaller expansion

tank should have individual support. The PVC water tank was not designed to carry this type of loading. The large tank should also be provided with a dust cover, and thermal insulation on top. It would appear that the current arrangement has been in place for a number of years.

The water supply pipes to the attic tanks should be insulated to prevent frost damage. In Metal tanks can become corroded and are prone to leaking. For the long term a PVC tank may be more suitable in this location.

The kitchen and bathroom fittings have a gravity feed hot water also provided to taps. The water pressure to bathroom wash hand basin is considered as average / fair.

Ventilation

There is passive ventilation provided to each of the rooms by means of an open wall vents, and it is recommended these are kept clear to allow fresh air into each room. It is not uncommon for these to be blocked by owners in the winter due to cold air circulation. However passive ventilation and circulation of air (combined with adequate heat) is very important to prevent mould and condensation forming.

There are no mechanical extract vents in the bathroom, this will require the window to be opened to release moisture after use of the shower / bath. As an upgrade to this you might consider adding a mechanical vent , with a duct to the outside. There is a mechanical vent in the kitchen cooker hood and this was working at the time of inspection.

External - Boundaries, driveway, footpath and gardens

Front driveway, side footpath include a mixture of cobble lock paving and concrete hard surface and is generally in good order. The step from side footpath to the rear concrete could be a slight trip hazard.

The rear concrete area is slightly rough and could be prone to puddles.

The rear timber garden shed is useful, although timber sheds are prone to decay over time and require preservative treatment as part of maintenance.

The concrete blockwork and brick boundary walls are generally in good condition, minor cracks only noted in isolated locations only.

The boiler house contains a strong smell of kerosene possibly due to a previous repair or service. It would be worthwhile to ask the service plumber to check at the next service.

Building Regulations and Health and Safety Issues

See bullet points -

- Please note the property was constructed before the enactment of building control act 1990 and therefore the requirements building regulations do not apply.
- Health and safety issues raised regarding window restrictors and balustrades to the handrail of stairs at 1st floor landing.
- The vendor has noted improvements made to the thermal insulation of external walls, however this is likely to be much lower than modern dwelling houses of a similar size.
- There is a potential trip hazard at rear step, especially for elderly people or those visitors not familiar with the building.
- The stairs from 1st floor level lead to the external escape in the ground floor kitchen. As the kitchen and living room are the highest risk areas for a fire to start. It is recommended that a series of good quality smoke / heat detectors are installed in the kitchen, sitting room, 1st floor landing. Some modern security alarms can also combine with smoke and heat detection.
- Access to the attic is restrictive, by entering over the bath. Care should be taken on access here.

Summary and Conclusion

The building is in generally good condition, the main items requiring attention are noted above and more concisely in the executive summary supplied under a separate cover.

We expect that you could choose to occupy the property with relatively little repair work required. Equally, you may have plans to upgrade or change features to suit your own requirement and taste.

As a rough estimate for budgeting purposes only, we would suggest a figure in the region of €3,500.00 - €5,000.00 exclusive of VAT and fees should be allowed for the main items of maintenance and repair work.

Lastly it is important to ensure that the property and contents are adequately insured after purchase.

Barry

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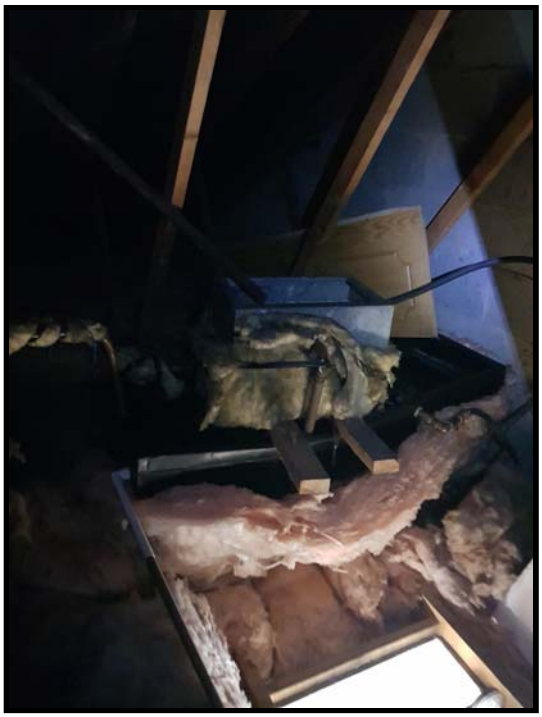
Appendix A - Photos

1. Cracked render at junction gable wall and brickwork

2. Rear elevation, leak at rear gutter

3. 150mm spacing between balustrade at landing level.

4. Expansion tank, supported on cold water storage tank in attic



5. Expanding foam installed on top of party wall in attic

6. Damaged rear window sill