

Vigilant Surveys

DAMP AND MOULD INVESTIGATION

Mid terrace house, Suffolk

Address withheld

Prepared for the client

Inspected October 2026

Specimen report

Rory Thorne, Damp & Compliance Surveyor · vigilantsurveys.co.uk

SPECIMEN REPORT

This is a real Vigilant Surveys damp and mould report, published with the written permission of the client it was written for. The name, the address, the postcode, the reference and the exact date of the inspection have been removed, along with six photographs: two views out of the windows showing the houses opposite, a room view with post on the mat, and three views of the outside of the house. Every reading, every finding and every recommendation is exactly as it was issued.

Summary in plain English

OVERALL RATING 7 OF 9

Several separate causes. Condensation mould throughout, from moist air in a house with almost no ventilation, made worse by the cold junction at the front of bedroom 1. Water getting into the base of the front wall beside the front door. A past escape of water through the ceilings. Salts in the kitchen party wall.

The mould in the house is mainly condensation. Damp and mould are a symptom, not the cause. The house has almost no ventilation: no trickle vents, a bathroom fan that does not work, and doors cut tight to the floor. The moisture in the air settles on the coldest surfaces and grows mould, which is why the bathroom, the loft hatch and the window reveals are worst. It is not rising damp, and it is not a window problem.

There are three other things. Water is getting into the bottom of the front wall beside the front door, below a leaking gutter end, where the phone cable comes through the wall and the mortar has crumbled. There are old water stains on two ceilings, which were dry on the day but need tracing from the loft. And there are salts in the kitchen wall shared with the neighbour, which only affect the paint.

The fix is straightforward. Clean off the mould, put in a working bathroom fan vented outside, add background vents and trim the doors, seal the cable entry, repoint the bottom of the front wall, repair the gutters, and have the loft looked at. Cleaning alone deals with the symptom; the ventilation deals with the cause.

Confidence	Highly probable on the evidence
What would settle it	An inspection of the loft, to find the source of the ceiling stains and check the insulation over the front of bedroom 1. A recheck of the front door corner once the cable entry and the base of the wall are made good, measured against the living room control of 8.9 %WME. If the kitchen wall is to be replastered, drilled samples at 600mm tested for moisture and for salts, measured against the kitchen control.

The overall rating is a judgement on the whole of the findings, not a meter reading. 1 is the lowest and 9 the highest. Green 1 to 3, amber 4 to 6, red 7 to 9.

1	Dry throughout. Nothing found.
2	Dry, with a minor defect worth putting right as good practice.
3	Dry, with a defect that could lead to damp if left.
4	Elevated moisture from a single identified cause, with no work to the structure needed.
5	Elevated moisture in more than one area, no damage, correctable with general maintenance.
6	An active damp problem with a clear cause, correctable with ordinary repairs.
7	Active damp causing damage to the building, or several causes acting together.
8	Widespread damp with significant damage, or a cause not yet identified.
9	Severe, spreading or causing structural damage. Needs attention before anything else.

Instruction and conditions

Instructed by	The client
Reason for the inspection	An independent whole property survey to establish the causes of the damp and mould in the house, with black mould reported around the bathroom and damp generally.
Scope	Whole property survey. Whole property survey: every room inside, and the front and rear elevations from ground level. The loft could not be accessed and was not inspected.
Date of inspection	October 2026
Weather at inspection	Light rain
Rainfall in the previous 48 hours	Light

External conditions	18°C, 75.5% RH, dew point 13.6°C
Access	Keys from the agent. The property was empty at the inspection

What the occupier reports

The property was empty at the inspection and there was no occupier to ask, so the history of the property could not be taken from an occupier. Where an answer below reads Not known, that is why.

The house has been empty for almost six months.

Pattern reported	Not known
How it presents	None recorded
Anything that changed it	None recorded
Washing dried indoors	Not known
Tumble dryer	Not known

The property

Type	Mid terrace
Approximate age	1850 to 1918
Wall construction	Solid brick, assumed from Age and type of the house; the wall was not opened up and not established by opening up
Ground floor	Suspended timber
Heating	Radiators seen; the heating was not run or tested at the inspection, how it is used not known

Room by room

This was a whole property survey. Moisture readings are comparative. %WME is not a moisture content, so readings are given against a control taken in an unaffected area of the same room.

Bedroom 1

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for this specimen copy

ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	19.5°C, 75.2% RH
Dew point	15°C
Coldest surface measured	21.9°C at External front aspect wall
Surface against dew point	6.9°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.
Thermal scan	COLD SPOTS Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 21.9°C, air 19.5°C, 75.2% RH.

CHIMNEY

Chimney breast	Present in this room.
Flue	NOT VENTED IN THE ROOM The breast is not vented in the room. A flue that is not ventilated at both ends stays cold and still. That is the condition in which flue condensation forms and in which hygroscopic salt contamination of the breast develops, and it is why a breast can read wet on a wall that has no other source of water available to it.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	10mm or more, measured 12mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	Suspended timber
Control reading	7.6 %WME. Internal party wall, opposite the chimney breast
Wall	9 %WME Party wall, opposite the chimney breast against a control of 7.6
Wall	10 %WME Internal partition wall against a control of 7.6

Chimney	12.1 %WME Chimney breast against a control of 7.6
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COLD BAND AT THE JUNCTION OF THE FRONT WALL AND THE CEILING

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Top corner of the front external wall

MOULD PATCH LOW ON THE FRONT EXTERNAL WALL

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Front external wall, below the window
Observed	Mould, Staining
Reading on it	13.4 %WME Front external wall, below the window, at the mould patch against a control of 7.6
Reading on it	8.3 %WME Front external wall, below the window, beside the mould patch against a control of 7.6

MOULD TO THE WINDOW REVEALS AND SEALANT

Surface	Reveal
Whereabouts	Window reveals and window board
Observed	Mould, Cracking, Staining
Reading on it	10.2 %WME Window reveal against a control of 7.6

STAINING AND MOULD SPOTTING TO THE CEILING

Surface	Ceiling
Whereabouts	Ceiling, along the front wall and in the centre of the room
Observed	Staining, Mould
Reading on it	8.3 %WME Ceiling, within the brown stained area against a control of 7.6
Reading on it	10.6 %WME Ceiling, at the front wall junction against a control of 7.6

MOULD SPOTTING BESIDE A CRACK IN THE WALL FINISH

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Wall finish, along a vertical crack
Observed	Mould, Cracking

CHIMNEY BREAST SEALED WITH NO VENT

Surface	Chimney
Whereabouts	Chimney breast
Observed	Other

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Light
Other observations	Staining, Mould to reveals



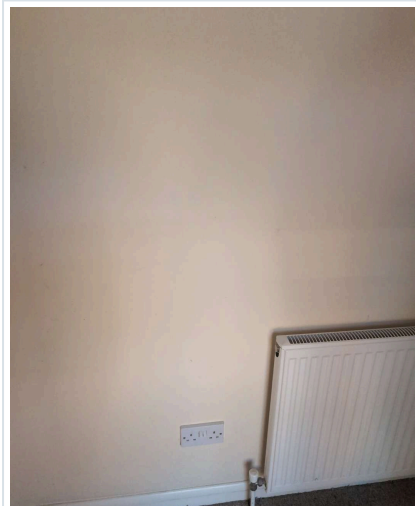
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



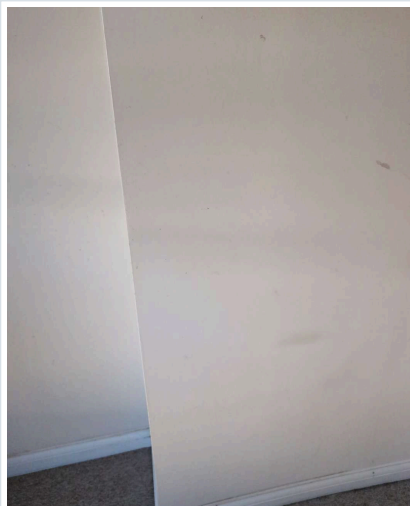
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



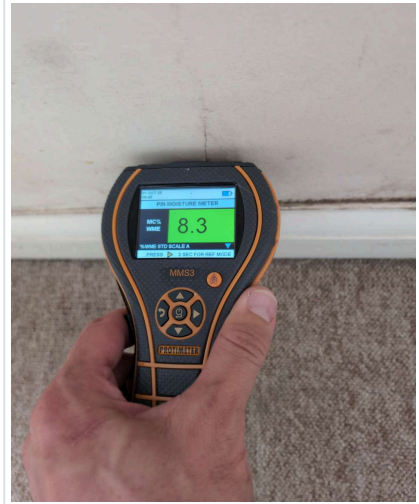
WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING

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WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



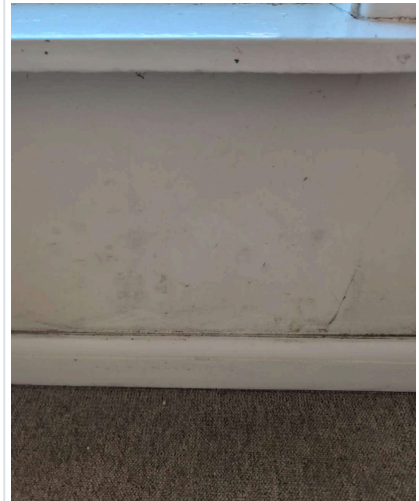
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



THERMAL
Thermal image, cold band at the front wall and ceiling junction



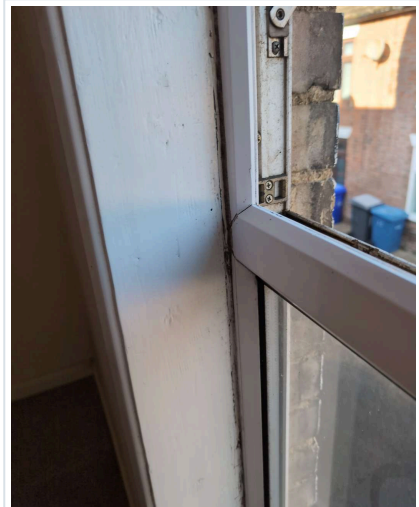
DEFECT



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DEFECT
Unvented chimney breast



METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION

Bedroom 2



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	24.8°C, 55.8% RH
Dew point	15.4°C
Coldest surface measured	20.4°C at External wall
Surface against dew point	5.0°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.
Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 20.4°C, air 24.8°C, 55.8% RH.

CHIMNEY

Chimney breast	Present in this room.
Flue	NOT VENTED IN THE ROOM The breast is not vented in the room. A flue that is not ventilated at both ends stays cold and still. That is the condition in which flue condensation forms and in which hygroscopic salt contamination of the breast develops, and it is why a breast can read wet on a wall that has no other source of water available to it.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 5mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	Suspended timber
Control reading	9.8 %WME. Internal wall
Wall	10.9 %WME Internal partition wall to the staircase against a control of 9.8

Wall	8.5 %WME Internal partition wall to the bathroom against a control of 9.8
Wall	7 %WME Party wall against a control of 9.8
Wall	6 %WME Cupboard over the stairs against a control of 9.8

RAISED READING LEFT OF THE WINDOW, WITH PATCHED BRICKWORK OUTSIDE

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Left of the window, at about 1200mm
Observed	Other
Reading on it	18.7 %WME Front external wall, left of the window, at about 1200mm against a control of 9.8

MOULD TO THE WINDOW REVEALS

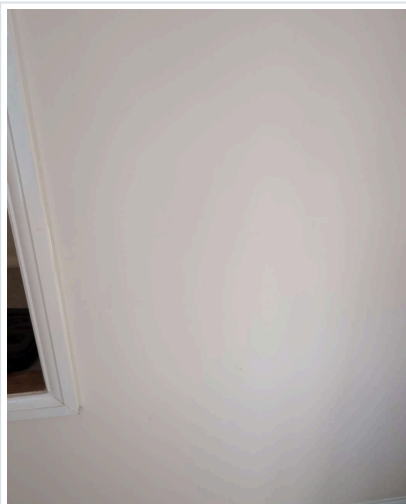
Surface	Reveal
Whereabouts	Window reveals and head
Observed	Mould
Reading on it	7.5 %WME Window reveal against a control of 9.8

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Moderate
Other observations	Mould to reveals



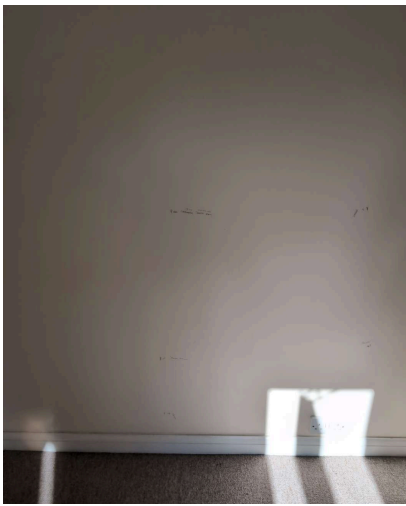
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



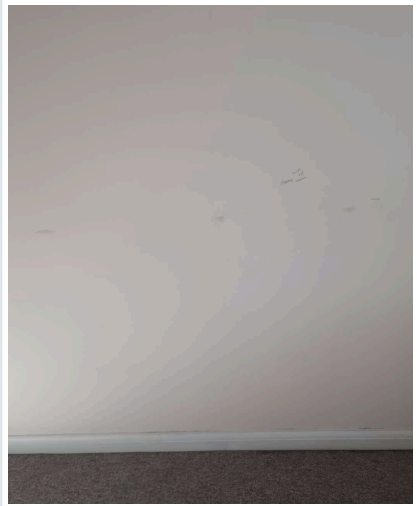
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



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WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



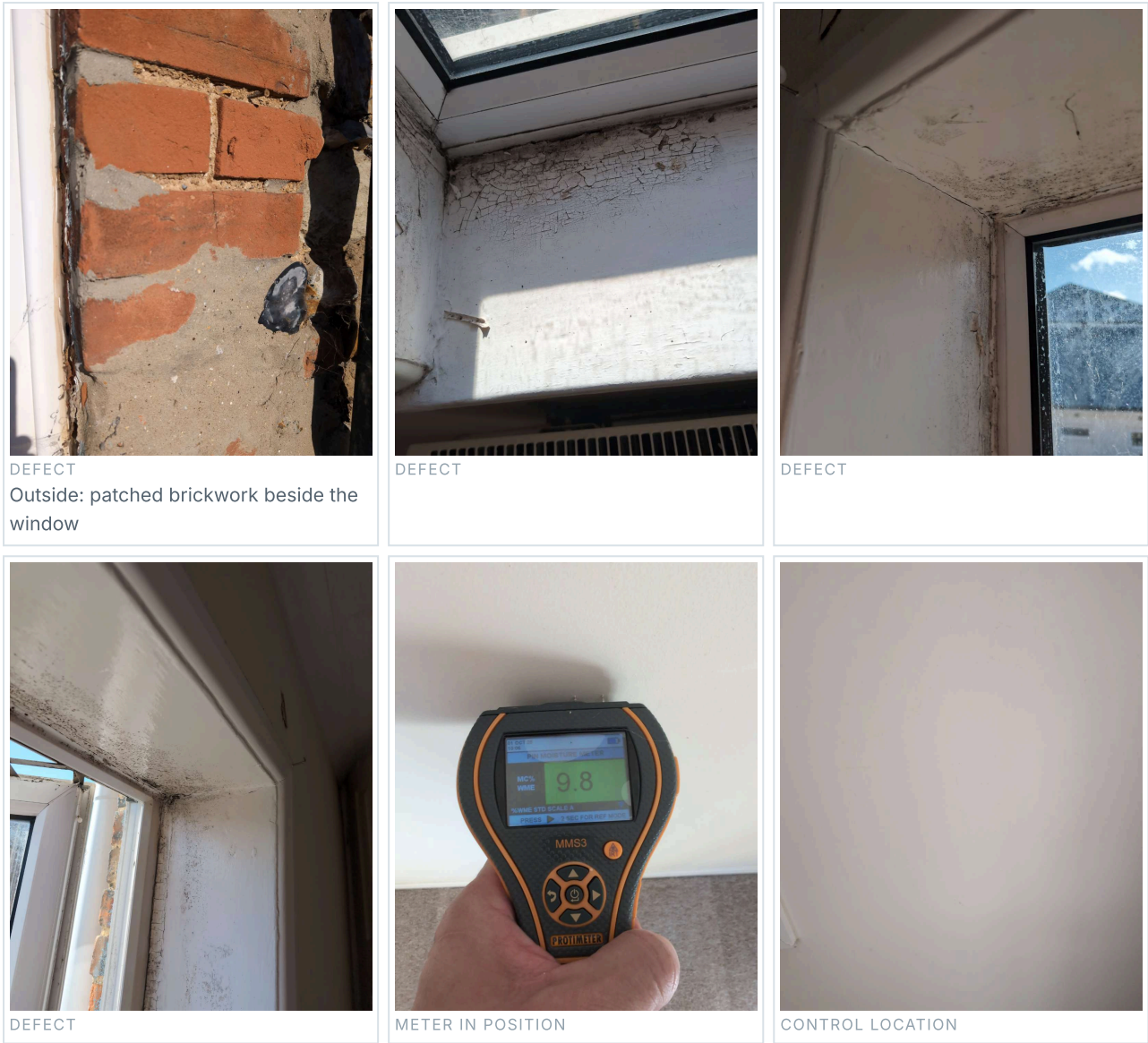
WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



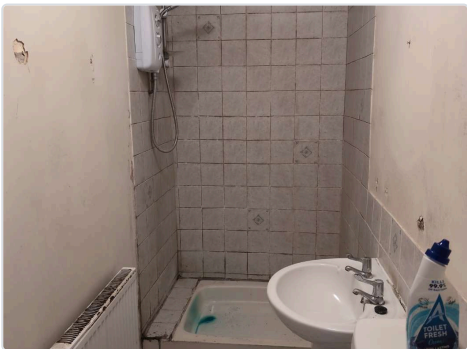
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



Bathroom



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	°C, % RH
Dew point	°C
Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	None
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	Axial, not operational
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 2mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	Suspended timber
Control reading	10.5 %WME. Internal partition wall to bedroom 2

MOULD TO THE CEILING, WALLS, TILES, GROUT AND SEALANT

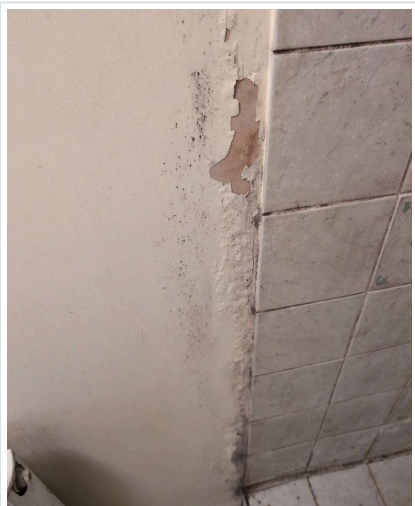
Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Throughout the room
Observed	Peeling paint, Mould
Reading on it	13.2 %WME Wall beside the shower, where the paint is peeling against a control of 10.5

OBSERVED

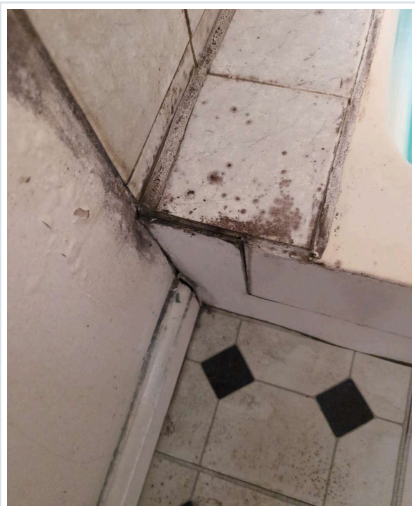
Visible mould	Moderate
Other observations	Staining



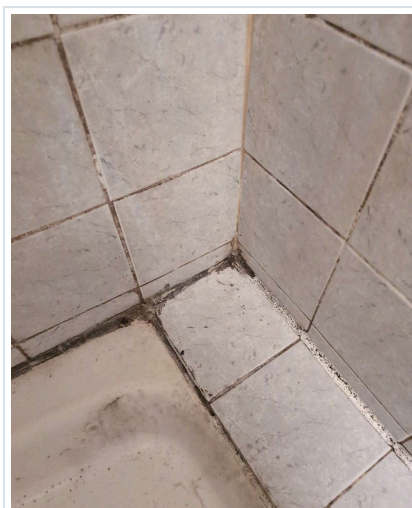
METER SHOWING THE READING



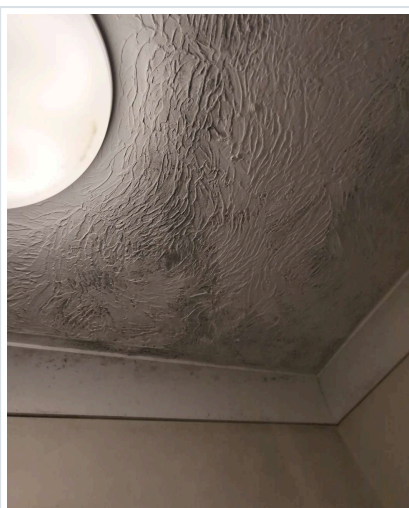
WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



DEFECT



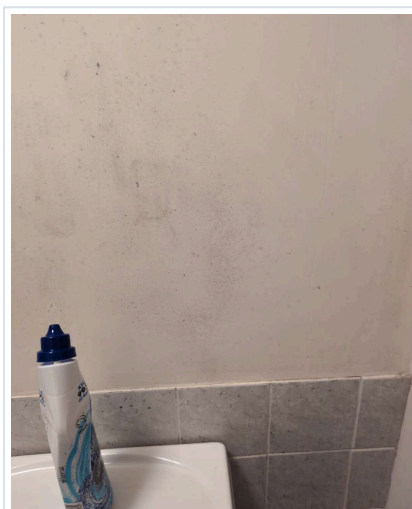
DEFECT



DEFECT

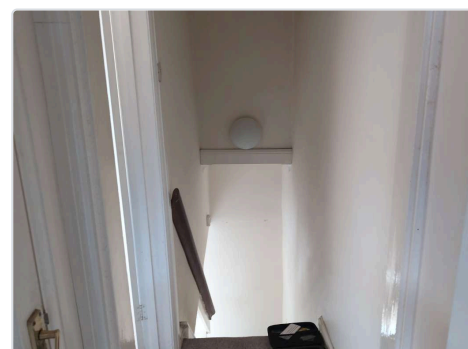


METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION

Staircase and landing



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	25.3°C, 58.4% RH
Dew point	16.5°C
Coldest surface measured	15.9°C at Wall above staircase
Surface against dew point	0.6°C BELOW DEW POINT Condensation is occurring on this surface.

Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 15.9°C, air 25.3°C, 58.4% RH.
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VENTILATION

Background ventilation	None
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Not applicable

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	Suspended timber
Control reading	9 %WME. Wall opposite the bathroom door
Wall	10.4 %WME Staircase wall against a control of 9
Wall	12.9 %WME External wall at the foot of the stairs against a control of 9

HEAVY MOULD TO THE LOFT HATCH

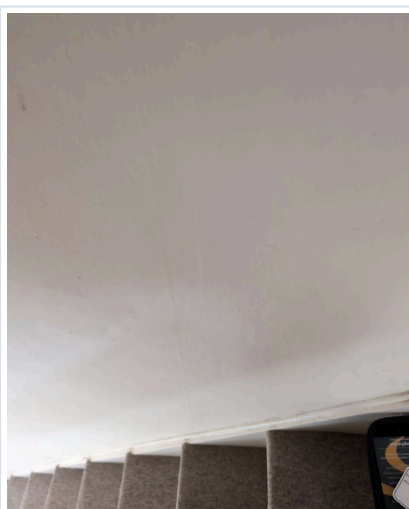
Surface	Ceiling
Whereabouts	Loft hatch in the landing ceiling
Observed	Mould

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Light
Other observations	Mould to reveals



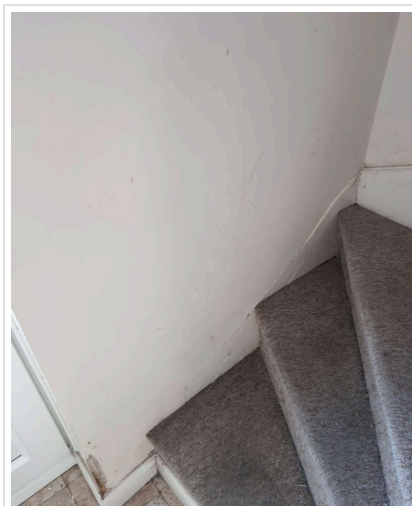
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



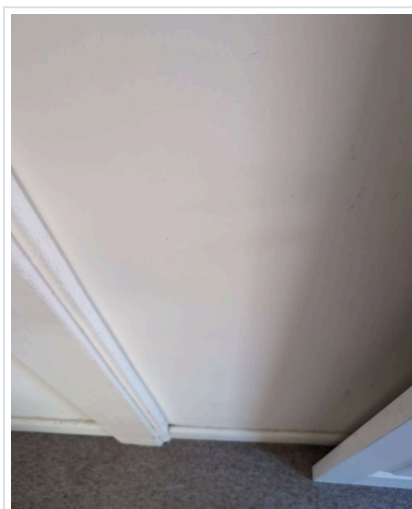
WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



DEFECT



METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION

Front living room

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for this specimen copy

ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	24.4°C, 59.3% RH
Dew point	15.9°C
Coldest surface measured	14.3°C at External front wall
Surface against dew point	1.6°C BELOW DEW POINT Condensation is occurring on this surface.

Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 14.3°C, air 24.4°C, 59.3% RH.
CHIMNEY	
Chimney breast	Present in this room.
Flue	VENTED BOTH ENDS The breast is vented in the room, and every pot recorded outside is open or vented, so the flue breathes at both ends. Which pot serves this flue is not established.
VENTILATION	
Background ventilation	Airbricks, Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 1mm
MOISTURE	
Floor in this room	Suspended timber, assumed and not established by opening up
Control reading	8.9 %WME. Left of the door to the kitchen
Wall	10.3 %WME Party wall, opposite the chimney breast against a control of 8.9
Wall	8.8 %WME Left of the door to the kitchen against a control of 8.9
MOULD SPOTTING TO THE FIRE SURROUND	
Surface	Chimney
Whereabouts	Timber fire surround and chimney breast
Observed	Staining
Reading on it	14.6 %WME Chimney breast, within the fire surround against a control of 8.9
DAMP PATCH LOW IN THE CORNER BESIDE THE FRONT DOOR	
Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Corner of the front wall beside the front door, low level
Observed	Staining
Reading on it	34.2 %WME Corner beside the front door, low on the plaster against a control of 8.9

Reading on it	42.3 %WME Corner beside the front door, at the base of the door lining against a control of 8.9
Reading on it	23.3 %WME Corner beside the front door, skirting level against a control of 8.9
Reading on it	20.6 %WME Corner beside the front door, beside the telephone socket against a control of 8.9

MOULD TO THE WINDOW SEALANT

Surface	Reveal
Whereabouts	Window, lower corners
Observed	Mould

WATER STAINING TO THE CEILING

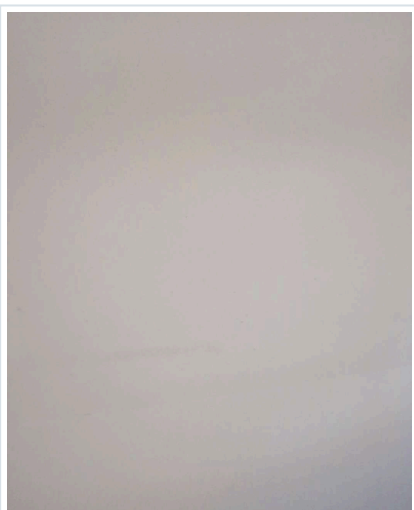
Surface	Ceiling
Whereabouts	Ceiling, near the corner
Observed	Staining

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Light
Other observations	Mould to reveals, Staining



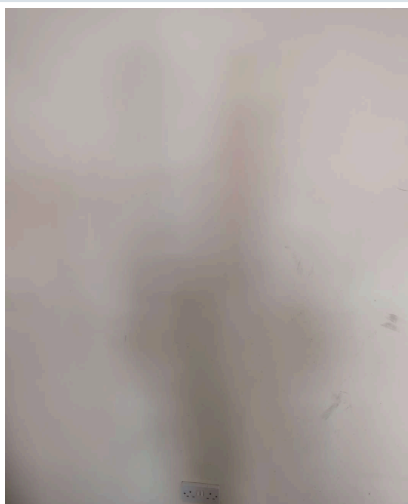
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



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DEFECT



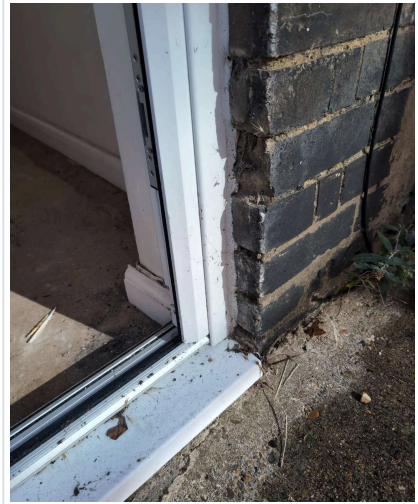
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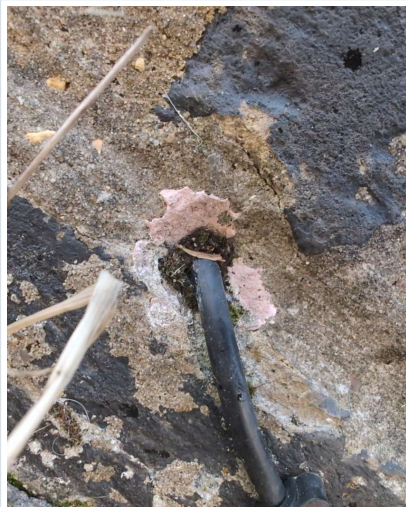
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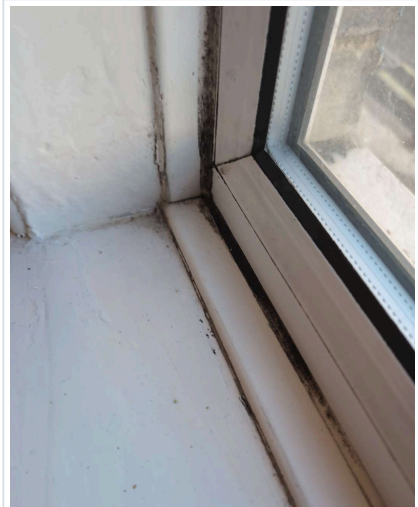
DEFECT
Outside, the same corner beside the front door



DEFECT
Outside, the base of the wall at the cable entry



DEFECT
The telephone cable entering through the base of the wall



DEFECT
Mould to silicone



DEFECT
Mould to silicone



DEFECT

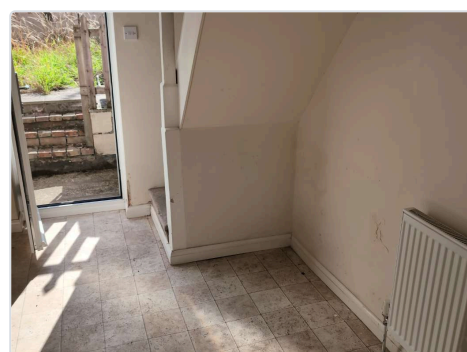


METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION

Kitchen



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	25.6°C, 50.4% RH
Dew point	14.5°C
Coldest surface measured	14.8°C at Wall to living room
Surface against dew point	0.3°C ABOVE Marginal, condensation is likely at times.
Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 14.8°C, air 25.6°C, 50.4% RH.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 1mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	Suspended timber
Control reading	15.3 %WME. Wall left of the door to the living room

Reading **7.4 %WME** Same wall as the control, left of the door to the living room, at about 1400mm against a control of 15.3

PARTY WALL TO THE NEIGHBOUR, OPPOSITE THE COOKER, PARTY WALL



	Left	Centre left	Centre right	Right
200mm below ceiling	x	x	7.6	7.5
1200mm	x	9.3	7.5	7.4
600mm	69.7	47	x	8.4
Skirting, 100mm	15.4	13	16.8	13.2

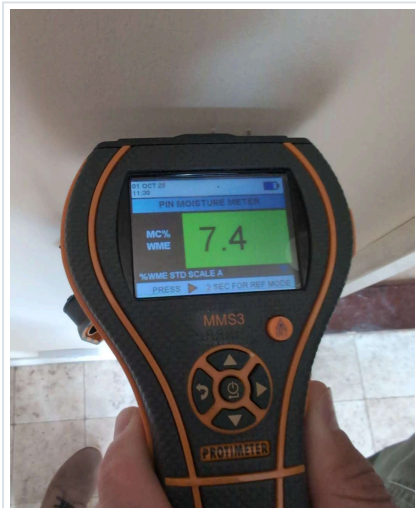
12 readings, 7.4 to 69.7 %WME, 4 could not be reached

SALT DEPOSITS AND LIFTING PAINT ON THE PARTY WALL

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Party wall to the neighbour, low on the left
Observed	Salting efflorescence, Peeling paint, Staining

OBSERVED

Visible mould	None
Other observations	Staining, Salting efflorescence, Peeling paint



METER SHOWING THE READING



DEFECT



DEFECT



THERMAL IMAGING

All accessible rooms were scanned with a thermal imaging camera under the conditions recorded above. cold bridging was identified at Bedroom 1. no anomaly was found in Bedroom 2, Bathroom, Staircase and landing, Front living room, Kitchen.

External inspection

Recorded per elevation. Damp is directional.

Rear

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for this specimen copy

Damp proof course	NOT VISIBLE
Surface against the wall	Concrete, falling away from wall
Rainwater goods	GOOD
Pointing render	FAIR
Masonry	FAIR
Drainage gullies	FAIR
Roof visible	POOR
Penetrations	POOR
Vegetation	GOOD

Airbricks

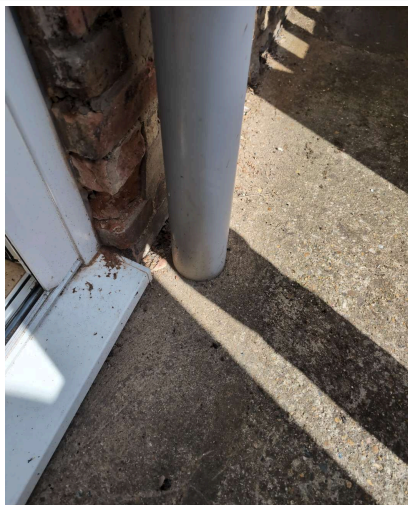
FAIR

Chimney stack

A stack was recorded on the party wall.

Pots

2 counted. 2 open.



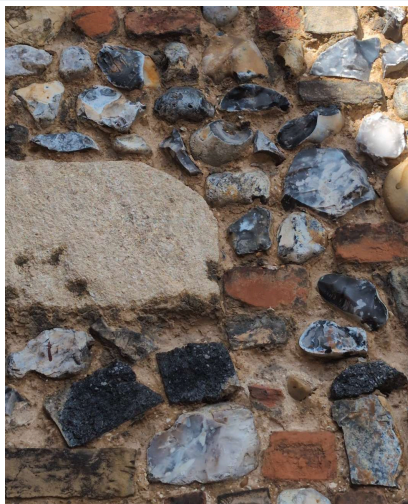
RAINWATER GOODS
Downpipe running into the ground by the back door



POINTING RENDER
Waste pipe through the wall, unsealed



POINTING RENDER
Rear walling



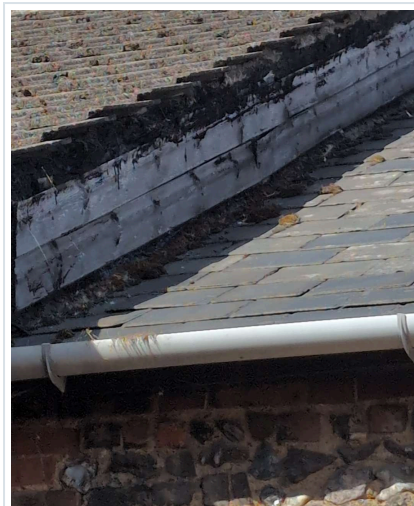
POINTING RENDER
Rear walling



DRAINAGE GULLIES
Gutter and eaves



ROOF VISIBLE
Rear roof slope



PENETRATIONS
Flashing at the roof abutment



DEFECT
Chimney stack, both pots open with no cap

Front

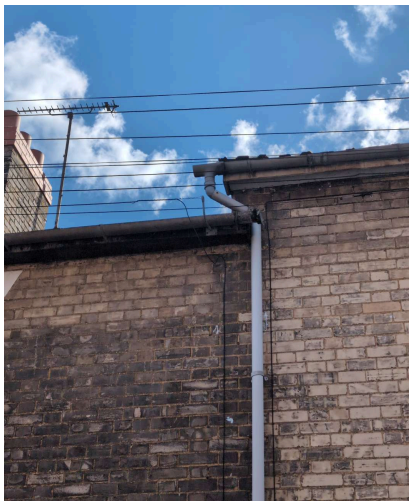
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for this specimen copy

Damp proof course	NOT VISIBLE
Surface against the wall	Concrete, falling level
Rainwater goods	FAIR
Pointing render	FAIR
Drainage gullies	GOOD
Masonry	GOOD
Roof visible	FAIR
Airbricks	FAIR
Penetrations	FAIR

Photograph removed
for this specimen copy

RAINWATER GOODS

Front gutter and downpipe at the party
line



RAINWATER GOODS

Front gutter and downpipe at the party
line



POINTING RENDER

Base of the front wall: painted brick,
blown mortar and concrete hard up to
the wall

THE CHIMNEY STACK

Every pot recorded is open or vented, so all of the flue tops breathe. Which pot serves which flue is not established and cannot be from ground level.

2 pots were counted against 3 chimney breasts recorded internally, which indicates that a flue has been sealed or taken down below roof level.

Pots are not matched to individual flues anywhere in this report. From ground level the route of a flue is not visible, so what is said above is said of the stack as a whole.

What was considered, and what was ruled out

Every mechanism that could produce these readings is judged on the evidence, not selected at the start. What has been excluded matters as much as what has not.

MECHANISM	VERDICT	EVIDENCE
Surface condensation	SUPPORTED	Black mould in every room except the kitchen, worst in the bathroom and on the loft hatch, on surfaces that read in the dry band. The wall above the stairs and the front wall of the living room were below the dew point at the inspection, so condensation was forming on them on a mild day. No room has a trickle vent, the bathroom fan does not work, and most door undercuts are 1mm to 5mm.
Bridging or construction defect	SUPPORTED	The thermal camera shows a cold band at the junction of the front wall and the ceiling in bedroom 1, 18.3 degrees against 19.7, and the mould and staining on that ceiling follow the same line. Mould at the window reveals sits on the junction of the wall and the frame, the coldest point of a solid wall.

Penetrating damp, building defect	SUPPORTED	Low in the corner beside the front door the readings reach 20.6 to 42.3 %WME against 8.8 to 10.3 in the rest of the room. Outside at the same corner the telephone cable enters through the base of the wall with a poor seal and the mortar has blown. In bedroom 2, 18.7 at about 1200mm left of the window roughly corresponds to patched brickwork outside.
Penetrating damp, wind driven rain	SUPPORTED	At the front the concrete runs level and hard up to the wall, and rain splashing back off it wets the lowest courses, which are painted and hold the water in. The front gutter end cap leaks and the gutter at the party line has no end cap. The leaking end cap sits directly above the front door corner, where the readings are highest.
Plumbing or drainage leak	SUPPORTED	Brown stains with tide marks on the ceilings of bedroom 1 and the living room are the marks water leaves as it dries. The stained ceiling in bedroom 1 reads 8.3 and 10.6 %WME, in the dry band, so a past escape of water is supported but there was no sign at the inspection that it is still live. The loft could not be reached to look for the source.
Salt contamination of plaster	SUPPORTED	On the kitchen party wall 69.7 and 47.0 %WME at 600mm sit beside 8.4 in the same row and 9.3 directly above. Water spreads through a wall, salts do not, so a sharp edge like that is the signature of salts. Powdery deposits and lifting paint were seen at the same place. An electrical meter reads salts and moisture alike.
Historic or residual moisture	CANNOT BE EXCLUDED	No source of water was found on the kitchen side of the party wall. The salts may have been left by water from the other side of the wall at some time, which could not be checked from this property.
Rising damp	EXCLUDED	The base of the walls reads in the dry band across the house except at two localised places, each with its own explanation: the front door corner, at the cable entry, and the kitchen party wall, where the readings have the sharp edge of salts. Rising damp would show as a band along the base of the walls.
Interstitial condensation	EXCLUDED	The walls are of solid construction with no cavity or internal lining in which condensation could form unseen.

Technical findings

The whole house was inspected in October 2026, every room inside and the front and rear elevations from ground level. The loft could not be accessed. It was raining lightly at the inspection, after light rain in the previous 48 hours, with 18 degrees and 75.5 per cent relative humidity outside. The house is a mid terrace of about 1850 to 1918, of solid construction, brick at

the front and flint, brick and stone at the rear. It was empty at the inspection, with the windows closed, and smelt musty on arrival. Readings were taken with a pin meter in %WME, a thermal camera and a hygrometer.

Mould. Black mould was found in every room except the kitchen, where none was seen. It is worst in the bathroom, across the ceiling, the walls, the grout and the sealant, and on the underside of the loft hatch, which is almost covered. It is also at the window reveals and sealant in both bedrooms and the living room, low on the front wall of bedroom 1, along the front edge of the bedroom 1 ceiling, and as spotting on the living room fire surround. Almost every surface it grows on reads in the dry band: the bathroom walls 10.5 to 13.2, the bedroom reveals 7.5 and 10.2, the bedroom 1 front wall 8.3 to 13.4. Mould on dry surfaces comes from moist air settling on them, not from water coming through the wall.

Condensation and ventilation. The wall above the stairs was 15.9 degrees, 0.6 degrees below the dew point, and the front wall of the living room was 14.3 degrees, 1.6 degrees below it, so condensation was forming on both on a mild October day. The kitchen wall was only 0.3 degrees above it. Bedroom 1 held the highest humidity in the house, 75.2 per cent at 19.5 degrees. The vapour pressure inside ran from 1.65 to 1.88 kPa against 1.56 kPa outside, an excess of 0.10 to 0.32 kPa, which as an indication from a single visit is low to moderate. No room has a trickle vent. The bathroom extract fan does not work and is dirty. Where its duct discharges was not confirmed: there is a vent in the front soffit it may run to, but the duct was not seen. The door undercuts are 1mm to 5mm, except bedroom 1 at 12mm, so air cannot move through the house when the doors are shut. With the house closed up and nothing to change the air, the moisture already in it stays in it. The hygrometer reading taken in the bathroom, 57.2 degrees and 25.9 per cent, is not a valid room reading and has not been used.

The cold junction in bedroom 1. The thermal camera shows a cold band along the junction of the front wall and the ceiling, about 18.3 degrees against 19.7 degrees on the ceiling beside it. The grey staining and mould spotting on that ceiling follow the same line. A band like this at the top of a solid external wall usually means thin or missing insulation at the eaves above it, which can only be confirmed from the loft. The mould at the window reveals sits on the junction of the wall and the frame, the coldest point of a solid wall. That is a thermal bridge, not a window problem, and it would be the same with new windows.

The loft hatch. The hatch is a thin board with no insulation behind it, so it is the coldest part of the landing ceiling, and moist air from the landing settles on it first.

The front door corner. Low in the corner beside the front door the readings are 20.6, 23.3, 34.2 and 42.3 %WME, against 8.8 to 10.3 elsewhere in the room and a control of 8.9. Outside at the same corner the telephone cable passes through the base of the wall with a poor seal, the mortar at low level has blown, and the lowest courses are painted. The concrete footway runs level and hard up to the wall, and no damp proof course is visible. Rain splashing back off a hard surface wets the base of a wall and can carry over a damp proof course, and paint on the brick holds that water in. The leaking gutter end cap sits directly above this corner, so the water escaping from it runs down onto the same place. The gutter at the party line also has no end cap. This is a localised patch with clear routes for water to get in, not a band along the wall.

Bedroom 2. One reading of 18.7 %WME, in the amber band, at about 1200mm left of the window, against 7.0 to 10.9 elsewhere in the room. Outside, at roughly the same point beside the window, a brick appears to have been taken out and the gap filled with a cement mortar rather than relaid.

Rain can get into the wall through a repair like that.

The ceiling stains. The centre of the bedroom 1 ceiling and a patch of the living room ceiling carry brown stains with tide marks, the marks water leaves as it dries. The bedroom 1 stain reads 8.3 and 10.6 %WME, in the dry band, so there was no sign that it is still being wetted. It is treated as a past escape of water. The source could not be looked for, because the loft could not be reached.

The kitchen party wall. On the party wall to the neighbour, 69.7 and 47.0 %WME at 600mm sit beside 8.4 at the right of the same row and 9.3 directly above at 1200mm, with the skirting row at 13.0 to 16.8. Water spreads through a wall, salts do not, so a sharp edge like that is the signature of salts. Powdery deposits and lifting paint were seen at the same place. Salts draw moisture from the air and lift paint in humid weather. No source of water was found on this side of the wall, so the salts may have come from the other side at some time. An electrical meter reads salts and moisture alike, so this is highly probable, not confirmed.

The chimneys. Both pots on the rear stack are open with no cap, so rain falls straight down the flues. The bedroom 1 chimney breast is sealed with no vent and reads 12.1 %WME, and the living room breast has a vent and reads 14.6, both in the dry band at the inspection.

The rear. The concrete yard falls away from the wall. The downpipe by the back door runs into the ground with no inspection access, so where it discharges could not be seen. A waste pipe passes through the wall with an unsealed gap, and the flashing at the roof abutment is in poor condition and holding debris.

Rising damp is excluded. The base of the walls reads in the dry band across the house apart from the front door corner and the kitchen party wall, and each has its own explanation.

Conclusion

The damp and mould in the house are highly probable on the evidence, not confirmed, to come from four separate causes.

The main one, and the reason there is mould in every room but the kitchen, is condensation. Moist air has nowhere to go: there are no trickle vents, the bathroom fan does not work, and the doors are cut tight to the floor. The moisture settles on the coldest surfaces, the bathroom ceiling, the loft hatch, the window reveals and the cold junction at the front of bedroom 1, where the thermal camera points to thin insulation above. Condensation was forming on two walls at the inspection on a mild day, and it is generally worse in the colder months.

The second is water getting into the base of the front wall beside the front door, from the leaking gutter end cap directly above, through the cable entry and the blown mortar, and from splashback off the concrete, held in by the painted brick. A smaller route of the same kind sits beside the bedroom 2 window, at the patched brickwork.

The third is a past escape of water through the ceilings of bedroom 1 and the living room. It read dry, so it is treated as past, but its source needs finding in the loft.

The fourth is salts in the kitchen party wall. They are cosmetic as long as the paint is the only thing affected.

The order matters. Clean the mould and get air moving through the house first: a working bathroom fan ducted outside, background ventilation in every room and door undercuts. Seal the front cable entry, repoint the base of the front wall and repair the gutters. Inspect the loft for the source of the stains and the insulation over bedroom 1. Redecorate only once the walls have had a drying period. A damp proof course is not called for: the readings show no rising pattern.

Recommendations

Vigilant Surveys carries out no remedial work and holds no contractor ties. No quantities or prices are given, so these can be put to any contractor for pricing.

Urgent

Actively causing damage, getting worse, or preventing other work from succeeding.

Severe

A material cause of the problem. The property will not dry until it is dealt with.

Moderate

Contributes to the problem, or should be put right as good practice.

Monitor

No action indicated on the evidence so far. Keep it under observation, and act if it changes or if it has not improved once the work above is done.

Cosmetic

Appearance only. Not a necessary measure.

These are ordered by priority, not by date. We do not set timetables, because the right sequence depends on access, on the works programme and on what the further investigation finds.

1. **Clean the black mould from every affected surface: the bathroom ceiling, walls, tiles and grout, the loft hatch, the window reveals in both bedrooms and the living room, the bedroom 1 front wall and ceiling, and the living room fire surround. Use detergent and water or a mould and mildew cleaner, dry thoroughly, bleach not needed. Renew the sealant to the shower tray, the basin and the windows where the mould has grown into it.**

URGENT Black mould is established in every room except the kitchen, and on the bathroom ceiling. Removing the growth is what matters. Mould that has grown into sealant cannot be cleaned out, so that sealant needs replacing.

2. **Replace the bathroom extract fan with a working fan ducted to the outside, confirming the duct runs to the vent in the front soffit or another outside terminal and not into the loft, with an overrun or humidity control so it keeps running after the room is used.**

URGENT The fan does not work and is dirty, and where its duct discharges was not confirmed. The bathroom is the worst room in the house for mould, and moist air put into a loft rather than outside condenses on the cold roof timbers.

3. **Seal the telephone cable entry at the base of the front wall beside the front door, and repoint the blown mortar at low level along the front wall.**

SEVERE The corner beside the front door reads 20.6 to 42.3 %WME against a room control of 8.9, and the cable entry and blown mortar at the same corner give water a way into the wall.

4. **Repair the leaking end cap on the front gutter and fit an end cap to the gutter at the party line.**

SEVERE The leaking end cap sits directly above the front door corner, where the readings reach 42.3 %WME, so water escaping from it runs down onto the base of the wall there.

5. **Add background ventilation to every habitable room, by trickle vents to the windows or a vent through the wall, and trim the internal doors to leave a gap of about 10mm at the floor.**

MODERATE No room has a trickle vent and most doors are cut 1mm to 5mm from the floor, so moist air cannot leave the house or move to where it can be extracted. Condensation was forming on two walls at the inspection.

6. **Insulate the back of the loft hatch and fit a draught seal around it.**

MODERATE The hatch is a thin board with no insulation and is almost covered in mould. An insulated, sealed hatch stays warmer and stops moist air from the landing passing into the loft.

7. **Make good the patched brickwork beside the bedroom 2 window, relaying a brick in place of the cement fill, and check the seal around the window frame at the same point.**

MODERATE The reading of 18.7 %WME at about 1200mm left of the window roughly corresponds to the patched brickwork outside, which gives rain a way into the wall.

8. **Fit ventilated caps to both chimney pots on the rear stack, and fit a vent to the sealed chimney breast in bedroom 1.**

MODERATE Both pots are open, so rain falls straight down the flues. The bedroom 1 breast is sealed with no vent, so any moisture in that flue has no way out. The breasts read dry at the inspection, so this is preventive.

9. **Confirm where the downpipe by the back door discharges, and redirect it if it is not connected to a working drain or a suitably distant soakaway. Seal the gap around the waste pipe through the rear wall, and clear and make good the flashing at the roof abutment.**

MODERATE The downpipe runs into the ground with no inspection access, so its route is unproven, and the open gap around the waste pipe and the poor flashing are routes for water into the rear wall. These are maintenance points rather than proven causes.

10. **While the house stands empty through the colder months, leave the background ventilation open and keep a low, steady heat on.**

MONITOR A closed, unheated house holds its moisture, and the cold surfaces it settles on grow mould. Air movement and a little heat keep the surfaces above the dew point.

11. **Leave the salts in the kitchen party wall as they are. Optional and cosmetic: if the finish is to be renewed, strip the affected plaster back to the masonry and replaster with a system designed for salt contaminated walls.**

MONITOR The salts only affect the paint and plaster finish, and ordinary plaster and paint over salts will lift again in humid weather. It is at the owner's discretion, when they naturally come to redecorate, and is not a necessary measure.

12. **Optional and cosmetic: once the mould is cleaned and the walls have had a drying period, seal the ceiling stains with a stain blocking primer and redecorate, and make good the perished paint on the timber window boards.**

COSMETIC The stains and perished paint are to the finishes. It is at the owner's discretion, when they naturally come to redecorate, and is not a necessary measure.

Further investigation

WHAT	WHY	WHAT IT WOULD ESTABLISH	ACCESS
An inspection of the loft.	The loft could not be accessed. The ceiling stains in bedroom 1 and the living room point to a past escape of water, and the cold band at the front of bedroom 1 points to thin insulation at the eaves. Both can only be checked from above. Benchmark: the bedroom 1 ceiling read 8.3 and 10.6 %WME against a room control of 7.6.	The source of the ceiling stains, including any water tank or pipework, the insulation cover over the front of bedroom 1, the condition of the roof covering from below, and where the bathroom fan discharges.	Non destructive
Whether there is any known history of a leak, and a pressure test of the heating and plumbing, before anything invasive.	The stains read dry, so there was no sign the leak is live. A known history, or a pressure test that holds, would confirm it as past.	Whether the escape of water is past or still live.	Non destructive
A recheck of the front door corner after the cable entry is sealed and the base of the wall repointed.	The corner reads 20.6 to 42.3 %WME. Once the routes for water are closed and the wall has had a drying period, the readings should fall towards the living room control of 8.9 %WME. If they do not, drilled samples would follow.	Whether the repairs have stopped the water at the front door corner.	Non destructive
Only if the kitchen wall is to be replastered: drilled samples from the party wall at 600mm, tested for moisture and for salts.	An electrical meter reads salts and moisture alike. Samples measured against a sample from the kitchen control position would show how much of the 69.7 and 47.0 is salts and how much is water.	Whether the wall is salt contaminated or wet, and the height any replastering needs to reach.	Invasive, consent required

Limitations of this inspection

Opening up	None undertaken
Instruments used	Thermal imaging, Moisture meter, Hygrometer, Surface thermometer
Weather qualification	Light rain at the time of inspection, with light rainfall in the previous 48 hours
Outside the scope of this report	Timber decay, which requires a CSRT qualified surveyor, Ventilation flow rates

Positions that could not be reached	Party wall to the neighbour, opposite the cooker, 4 positions
Party wall	The wall at Party wall to the neighbour, opposite the cooker is a party wall shared with the neighbouring house. No access to the adjoining property was available at the time of the inspection, so conditions within and beyond that structure could not be inspected directly. The findings in this report are based on the internal evidence and on the external face of the wall where visible.
Chimney pots	Individual pots could not be matched to individual flues. The stack was inspected from ground level, from which the route of each flue is not visible. Where a pot's state is given it is given for the stack as a whole and not attributed to any one breast.

How to read the readings in this report

Moisture readings are comparative. They are taken with an electrical resistance meter and expressed as a wood moisture equivalent, %WME. On plaster and masonry this is a comparative indication, not a measurement of how much water the material contains. That is why readings are given against a control taken in an unaffected area of the same room.

Green, below 17 %WME
Dry

Amber, 17 to 19 %WME
At risk

Red, 20 %WME and above
Wet

A hatched square marked x in a moisture grid is a position that could not be reached, for example behind fitted furniture. It is not a dry reading.

Dew point is calculated, not measured, from the recorded air temperature and relative humidity using the Magnus approximation. Where a surface temperature has been measured, comparing the two shows whether condensation is occurring on that surface.

Where a moisture grid is shown, the readings are laid out on the surface they were taken from. The pattern is diagnostic. Moisture rising from the ground declines with height, a localised patch points to water entering at that point, and a band with an abrupt upper edge usually means plaster carried too low rather than groundwater.

Use of this report as an example

We publish anonymised examples of our work so that people can see what a Vigilant survey report actually contains before they book one. We do that only with the written agreement of the client the report was written for, and only after they have seen the exact version we propose to publish. The name, the property address and the postcode are removed, along with any photograph showing anything personal. This copy is published on that basis.

Vigilant Surveys

Rory Thorne, Damp & Compliance Surveyor. Specimen report.

