REPORT

- on -

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XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

HALSTEAD, ESSEX

CO9 XXXXX

- for -

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

1.00 INSTRUCTIONS

1.10 Scope of Instructions

In accordance with the attached Terms & Conditions of Engagement dated XXXXXXXXXXXX to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX to inspect the above property and prepare a Residential Building Survey in respect of a proposed purchase.

1.20 Scope of Inspection

The property was inspected on XXXXXXXXXXXX and, at the time of the inspection, was vacant and unoccupied although remained partly furnished and floors covered with cushioned/vinyl flooring to most rooms apart from the Utility Room where there were quarry tiles and the first floor including the staircase where there were fitted carpets. A full inspection was limited due to the following:-

- Floor coverings/fitted carpets mostly held down around the edges which could not be lifted for a full inspection of the floor surfaces beneath. A small area of carpet could be rolled back to the front of Bedroom 1 to inspect the floor.
- There are a dilapidated range of Outbuildings along the north-east side boundary and, since you are fully aware of their condition, these have not been inspected.
- There is also evidence of a well head to the rear yard area straddling the boundary with the attached property and this has not been inspected.
- There was no means of access into the flat felt roof voids of the two storey and single storey rear extensions and the build up and condition of the roof voids and the presence or suitability of insulation has not been verified.

- A full inspection of the original pitched two storey roof space was limited to an inspection around the roof hatch of Bedroom 1 due to the construction of the roof and the presence of several layers of quilt glass fibre insulation.
- The original timber framework has been enclosed by rendering externally and linings internally and the full condition of the timber framework could not be verified. However, from an inspection of the external and internal surfaces and our tests with an electrical conductor moisture meter, we have made some preliminary conclusions as to the expected condition and this will need to be verified by further investigation by removal of small areas of external rendering and internal linings.
- There was no means of access into the small area of lean-to slate roof over the Rear Lobby and we are not able to report on the construction or condition of the roof or the presence or suitability of insulation.
- Some of the windows have been fitted with safety locks and no keys are available and not all the windows have been opened for tests.
- The fireplaces were not in use at the time of the inspection and the effectiveness and efficiency of the flues has not been tested.
- The oil fired heating boiler and electric immersion heater were not in operation at the time of the inspection and have not been tested.
- The underground foul drainage pipes from the Cottage to the septic tank in the rear garden have not been inspected as we could not locate any intermediate inspection chambers following the line of the drain run.
- The first floor ceiling joists have been mostly concealed apart from where they downstand in the Sitting Room and Kitchen and where the joists have been concealed and built into external walls we have made preliminary conclusions as to their expected condition.

2.00 DESCRIPTION

2.10 Construction History

The property comprises the right-hand end of terrace of 3 no. cottages which were probably built around 1800 and have been extensively extended with two and single storey extensions to the rear and improved from about the 1950's. The original cottages were built of timber framing and possibly built on small brick plinths probably finished with lath and plaster externally under a pitched clay plain/peg tile roof. It is evident that lath and plaster and external finishes have

been modified with cement based renders and the plinth to the gable end wall has been reconstructed, where there is a significant change in ground levels between the front and side elevations, possibly during the 1950's when the extensions were built. The two storey rear extension has probably been built of solid brick, cement rendered and coloured externally down to ground level (bridging any damp proof course in the walls), under a shallow lean-to pitched mineral felt flat roof. The single storey rear extension comprising the Bathroom and Utility Room, Store and Cloakroom has been built of probably 100mm brick or block, cement rendered and covered externally down to ground level, under a similar shallow lean-to pitched mineral felt flat roof. The Rear Lobby has been enclosed under a shallow lean-to pitched natural Welsh type slate roof. The Rear Porch has been enclosed under a lean-to shallow pitched corrugated perspex sheet roof.

We understand that the Vendors family purchased the property in April 1950 and shortly afterwards the two storey and single storey rear extensions were built. Other improvements have been carried out since, including works to the plinth wall to the gable end wall, installation of oil fired boiler radiator central heating and modern Kitchen and Bathroom fittings.

2.20 Location

The property is situated fronting the north-west side of XXXXXX Road amongst a small group of similar cottages about 2 miles south-west from the large village of XXXXXXXXXX having facilities catering for most daily needs. The cottages are positioned on the bend of the road and have been set back about 15m from the road edge. The vehicular access to the property is at the north-eastern corner of the site and visibility and exiting the site towards XXXXXXXXXXXX is very poor and the vehicular access is hazardous. We understand there have been a number of accidents along this road particularly during winter months where vehicles have slipped off the road in poor weather conditions as drivers have not anticipated the bend in the road and the frontage wall has been previously damaged and rebuilt.

The front elevation to the road faces south-east.

2.30 Accommodation

The external appearance is as shown on the attached colour photographs (**Appendix A**).

The accommodation is as shown on the attached sketch floor plans (**Appendix B**) and extends to a gross external floor area of about 107m² (1152ft²) and briefly comprises:-

2.31 Ground Floor

Sitting Room (front)

with timber panelled entrance door, modern double hung single glazed painted timber vertical sliding sash window to front, tiled fireplace, original painted timber vertical tongue and groove boarded 'T' hinge door to staircase to first floor off, exposed central first floor beam over and exposed first floor joists (running parallel to the front wall), painted timber panelled (2 no. upper glazed panels) door to Dining Room with step down.

Dining Room (side)

with window to side as Sitting Room, modern folding door into Kitchen, similar door as staircase door into Rear Lobby, plastered chimney breast with tiled fireplace and hearth with redundant Redfyre coal fire (glass doors missing), Horstmann Centaur TC1 time control clock and programmer for central heating boiler and domestic hot water with wall thermostat above.

Kitchen (side)

with exposed first floor joists, modern single glazed casement/vent painted timber window to side, modern basic worktop with stainless steel inset sink with drawers and cupboards under and pair of matching wall cupboards over, part understairs storage cupboard with copper cold water stopcock and water supply pipe.

Rear Lobby (rear)

with door as Sitting Room/Dining Room to Rear Porch, full height fitted cupboards to Sitting Room rear wall to side of Dining Room chimney breast, 2 no. 225mm x 75mm metal air vents for subfloor ventilation to the attached property.

Rear Porch (rear)

with floor sloping down to rear sliding exit door, 1930's style painted timber panelled doors off to Bathroom and Utility Room and flush door off to Cloakroom.

Bathroom
(side/rear)

with metal single glazed casement window to side, full height ceramic wall tiles to all walls, (tiles are peeling off to the Utility wall partition), basic white suite with acrylic bath and pedestal hand basin, storage cupboards with Airing Cupboard with slatted shelves with factory foam lagged indirect hot water cylinder with immersion heater and Honeywell cylinder stat with high level cupboard with rectangular plastic storage tank above with overflow pipe into Rear Porch.

Utility Room
(side/rear)

with window to side as Bathroom, stainless steel single drainer sink with basic DIY worktop to side and cupboards under (decayed below), Bolter Camray 5 balanced flue floor standing oil fired boiler, plumbing (hot, cold and waste) for washing machine, sloping ceiling and glazed screen to Rear Porch.

Cloakroom
(rear)

with full height ceramic wall tiles to all walls, high level cistern WC suite, metal bottom hinge single glazed window to rear and sloping ceiling.

2.32 **First Floor** – partly formed in the roof slope to the original cottage.

Landing

with front/rear exposed eaves wall plates and these continue into Bedroom 1, staircase in an 'L' shape with galleried Landing rails, small side hung painted timber casement window to side, original door and staircase off to Bedroom 1 and modern painted timber flush doors with steps down into Bedrooms 2 & 3, MEM wire fuse box unit and electricity meter with current operated earth leakage circuit breaker.

Bedroom 1
(front over Sitting Room)

with window to front as Sitting Room, cast iron Victorian style inset fireplace and very small access into roof space over.

Bedroom 2 (side/rear over Dining Room)	with modern single glazed painted timber top vent window to side (no means of escape), plastered chimney flue from Dining Room below with 2 no. 225mm x 150mm plastic slotted vents and sloping ceiling.
Bedroom 3 (rear Dining Room)	with metal single glazed casement window to rear, plastered chimney breast from Dining Room/Sitting Room below and sloping ceiling.

2.33 <u>Outside</u>

Large plot with large gardens around the Cottage which fan out to the rear include paddock areas which we understand extend to about 4 acres. We have attached a copy of the Official Copy of the Title Plan supplied by the Land Registry attached to the HIP which shows the extent of the boundaries edged in red and these have not been verified.

Your Solicitor should verify boundary positions and ownerships on all sides of the property. Your Solicitor should also verify whether there are any easements for the overhead electricity cables which cross the site front north-east corner at the road and run in a westerly direction to the north-west rear boundary.

The large garden areas around the Cottage comprise a small orchard to the north-east side beyond which is the hoggin vehicular access off XXXXXXX Road which leads to the range of dilapidated Outbuildings along the north-east side boundary. The orchard is enclosed by a brick frontage boundary wall and low level hedging to the remaining two sides and there is a very tall (12/15m height) Oak tree growing just inside the front boundary potentially within the sphere of influence to affect the foundations/footings to the Cottage (see further comments at **Paragraph 4.20** below). There are also lawn areas around the orchard and the concrete path runs from the front gate to the front door and around the side and rear of the Cottage to the concrete yard area to the rear of the Rear Porch where there is an old well head and pump partly straddling the boundary fence with the attached property. Attached to the side of the Cloakroom is an external Store. Gates to the side and rear of the yard lead to a large lawn area/paddock where there is a 600 gallon steel oil tank and at the north-western boundary is an old septic tank.

2.34 Services

We understand that the main services of electricity and water are connected to the property. We understand that foul drainage is connected to a septic tank type installation in the rear garden (the approximate position has been marked on the attached Land Registry Plan). We understand that the septic tank is shared with the adjacent to Cottages. ***You are advised to check with your Solicitor whether there is a Legal arrangement for the sharing of the septic tank and the arrangements for dividing the maintenance costs. You are also advised to confirm whether the outfall from the septic tank discharges into a water course or ditch and that Environment Agency consent has been obtained***. We understand that the oil fired boiler supplies domestic hot water and central heating to mostly modern stove enamelled radiators having thermostatic radiator valves whilst back up domestic hot water is provided by an immersion heater.

2.40 Tenure and Town & Country Planning

We have assumed that the property is Freehold and is not subject to any onerous restrictions or covenants. There was no evidence of any tenancies and we have assumed that vacant possession will be available on Completion.

The Building Regulations require with effect from 1st April 2002, that the oil fired boiler has either Building Regulations Approval or is installed by Contractors under the Competent Persons Scheme which are Government Approved/Trade Organisations whose members can self certify the installation to meet the standards for Building Regulations. ***Your Solicitor should verify whether an OFTEC Installation and Commissioning Certificate was issued for the oil fired boiler and central heating system.***

2.50 Outgoings

From a telephone enquiry to Braintree District Council (Council Tax Department) we note that the property is currently classified in Band B (£40,001-52,000) for Council Tax purposes.

2.60 Weather

Cool (14°C), dry and overcast.

3.00 ROOFS

3.10 Externally

3.11 Roof Coverings

Main Pitched Roof

Original pitched roof continues over the attached Cottage and is covered with clay plain/peg tiles with matching half round ridge tiles. The roof slopes are relatively level and even and there was no indication of any significant roof spread to the front eaves, whilst the rear eaves are concealed by the two storey flat roof extension. The tiles are typically chipped which is not unusual. ***There is 1 no. tile missing to the rear near the ridge line above the slate roof and this should be replaced. You should be aware that clay plain tiles will be subject to gradual deterioration as part of the aging and weathering process and an allowance for replacement tiles should be factored into long term maintenance budgeting.***

Rear Extension – Two Storey Shallow Pitched Roof

Shallow pitched roof covered with mineral felt and there are no raised non-drained edges which prevent water from running over the edge of the roof and direct surface water to the eaves gutter. The felt is generally sound at present (see **Paragraph 3.12 Chimneys** below concerning weatherproofing). You should be aware that flat felt roofs have a limited life expectancy of 10-15 years after which they require replacement. ***The felt roofs can fail quickly and you should factor in replacement flat felt roof coverings as part of long term maintenance budgeting.***

Rear Extension – Single Storey Shallow Pitched Roof

Shallow pitched roof covered with mineral felt and there are no raised non-drained edges which prevent water from running over the edge of the roof and direct surface water to the eaves gutter. The felt is generally sound at present (see **Paragraph 3.12 Chimneys** below concerning weatherproofing). You should be aware that flat felt roofs have a limited life expectancy of 10-15 years after which they require replacement. ***The felt roofs can fail quickly and you should factor in replacement flat felt roof coverings as part of long term maintenance budgeting.*** The felt upstand to the two storey wall above is generally satisfactory.

Rear Extension – Rear Lobby

Shallow lean-to pitched roof covered with second hand natural Welsh type slates. Some of the slates are typically chipped but are generally serviceable. ***As the slates will be subject to gradual deterioration you should factor into long term maintenance budgeting for replacement of individual slates.*** The cement weatherproofing at the adjacent side and upper walls is mostly serviceable, although it may still be leaking at the lower edge to the Dining Room wall (see **Paragraph 7.00 Internal Walls and Partitions** below).

Rear Extension – Rear Porch

Shallow lean-to pitched roof with corrugated Perspex sheeting which overlaps the single storey flat roof extension. The attached Cottage flat roof partly overlaps the felt roof to the upper part of the roof, whilst to the lower part a 'DIY' flash-bond weatherproofing joint has been formed against the neighbour's brick wall extension. ***There is evidence of at least 1 no. broken sheet over the Utility Room and 2 no. sheets to the rear exit door which will need replacement. This roof is a temporary roof and will be subject to ongoing maintenance and repair.***

3.12 Chimney

Main Stack

Red brickwork (900mm x 450mm) with cement mortar pointing with 2 no. flues serving the tiled fireplace to the Sitting Room and the cast iron inset fireplace to Bedroom 1 above. Each of the flues has a tall clay flue pot. The front face of the stack is concealed behind the roof line and the gutter and weatherproofing could not be inspected. ***We recommend this is inspected to verify the suitability and condition of the weatherproofing and the condition of the concealed brickwork.*** The brickwork which can be inspected is generally satisfactory. The felt upstands with the adjacent two storey flat roof are generally satisfactory. The stack is generally straight and otherwise satisfactory.

Secondary Stack

This originally served the fireplace to the Dining Room and is now redundant. The stack has been cut down to just above the roof line to the two storey flat roof. The stack has been capped off with a concrete slab. The felt upstands around the stack with the flat felt roof are peeling and it is evident that surface water is penetrating and causing dampness within Bedroom 2 below. ***We recommend that the top section of the stack should be reduced to below the roof line and the flat felt roof made good over. The damp affected plaster to Bedrooms 2 & 3 need to be allowed to dry out and you***

should make some allowance for replacement plaster and repairs as necessary.

3.13 Soffits, Fascias and Bargeboards

Mostly painted timber lengths and there are some replacement plastic bargeboards and a flush fascia to the rear of the single storey rear extension. ***Paintwork is peeling off the timber lengths and, as part of redecorations, you should allow for repairs to decayed timber.***

3.14 Rainwater Goods

As there was no significant rainfall at the time of the inspection all joints should be checked over for leaks as part of regular repair and maintenance.

Plastic half round gutter to front. The downpipe has been removed at the front corner and this has caused water penetration into the cracked render (see further comments at **Paragraph 4.00 Main Walls** below). ***A replacement downpipe should be fitted to connect into soakaway drainage at least 5 metres from the Cottage.***

Plastic half round gutter to rear of two storey flat roof extension. The swanneck has been badly repaired and has now become detached and is leaking over the corner of Bedroom 2 into the cracked render (see further comments at **Paragraph 4.00 Main Walls** below). ***The swan neck should be properly repaired.*** The downpipe discharges into a converted dustbin below and should be connected into soakaway drainage at least 5 metres from the Cottage.

Plastic half round gutter to the rear of the single storey roofs has become disconnected at the outlet to the swan neck and needs reconnecting. The downpipe discharges into a water butt and has also become disconnected and requires re-fixing. The downpipe should be piped into the ground to an appropriate soakaway at least 5 metres from the cottage.

Plastic half round gutter to the rear of the slate roof over the Rear Lobby is enclosed in the Rear Porch. ***The plywood fascias enclosing the roof above have decayed and require replacement.*** The downpipe runs down the adjacent wall and over the Rear Porch floor to discharge over the concrete yard area to the rear. ***The downpipe should be connected to appropriate soakaway drainage at least 5 metres from the cottage.***

3.20 Roof Spaces

Main Pitched Roofs

Very small narrow hatch in the ceiling to Bedroom 1 gives a limited 'head and shoulders' access into the roof space above Bedroom 1 and the Landing. The presence of 2/3 layers of quilt glass fibre insulation over the ceiling further restricted an inspection.

The roof is generally formed from original as built softwood framing with a raised ceiling tie comprising about 110mm x 40mm rafters rising from front to rear wall plates to a central ridge board at about 350/400mm centres. At the mid span of the rafters are about 100mm x 70mm purlins to both front and rear roof slopes and beneath these and cut around the purlins and fixed to the sides of the rafters are 3 no. roughly equally spaced 190mm x 35mm collars. There is also evidence of 120mm x 35mm raised ceiling tie to the first floor joists at about 350/400mm centres fixed to the sides of the front and rear rafters. The raised ceiling tie roof frame is generally performing adequately where it could be inspected. We noted some scattered timber infestations to the roof timbers around the hatch which are probably from woodworm and to the areas which could be seen these are inactive. ***However, as a precaution, a more thorough roof space inspection should be undertaken by a Specialist Timber Treatment Firm to verify whether there are any areas of activity which need treatment.***

There is evidence of modern bitumen felt roof lining to the top face of the rafters and the underside has been lined with some aluminium foil sheet stapled to the rafters and this prevented a full inspection of the rafters and felt lining. To the areas which could be seen the felt is generally sound. There are timber frame gable and Party Walls and evidence of modern bitumen felt linings and where these could be inspected these are generally satisfactory.

Other Roofs

As there was no means of access into the other flat and pitched roof spaces, we are not able to report further on the construction or condition of the roof frames or the presence or suitability of insulation.

4.00 MAIN EXTERNAL WALLS

4.10 Construction

Timber Frame Walls

As reported at **Paragraph 2.10** above, original timber frame walls have been concealed externally with cement based renders and internally with lath and plaster and linings and the full condition of the framework could not be examined. Since the external rendering has been taken down to ground level with plinths to the front and side elevations, we suspect that moisture can be drawn up the plinths and trapped within the timber framework and this will case decay to both the horizontal sole plates and connecting vertical studwork. In addition, the vertical crack to the front corner of the Cottage and the missing downpipe have allowed both penetrating and surface water run off the pitched roofs to filter through the cracks and we suspect these have caused decay to the timber framework (see further comments at **Paragraph 4.30 Damp Proof Course** below). ***To assess the full extent of the framework decay, it will be necessary to remove small areas of external rendering at the front corner and along the front wall above the plinth beneath the window to examine the timber framework and see the extent of decay and repairs required. We are not able to assess the full extent of repair required, but from previous experience of timber frame properties, would advise you to consider allowing for extensive repairs to the horizontal sole plates (particularly to the front elevation) and the connecting vertical studwork (see further comments at Paragraph 4.30 Damp Proof Course below regarding additional works).***

The timber framework has been subject to historic framework movements which are not uncommon with properties of this age and construction and we suspect that there have been previous problems to the gable end wall where the plinth walls have been refurbished with a deep plinth which has also been rendered to ground level. The horizontal sole plate has been raised up above ground level about 1.1m to take account of the difference in levels between the front and side gardens. The plinth wall to the front has been rendered over to ground level and the horizontal sole plate is assumed to rest on top of the plinth which would be some 250mm (approx.) above external ground level. Where there have been movements of the timber framework, the cement renders have cracked and some repairs have been carried out below the Sitting Room window and to the whole of the gable end wall. We suspect the repairs to the gable end wall and cement rendering works may have been carried out in the early 1950's when the two storey extension was built.

The application of cement renders to older timber framework (and also the solid brick plinth walls) does to some extent compromise the original breathability philosophy of the timber framework. Additionally, where there is seasonal movement of the timber framework, the cement renders are far less pliable than older lime based plasters and renders and are prone to cracking which can then allow surface water into the timber framework and cause further decay. ***The cracked rendered areas to the front and side of the frame walls should be carefully raked out and we recommend that all future rendering works are carried out in a breathable lime based render and walls painted with a breathable lime based paint.***

Where the original timber frame rear wall has now been enclosed by the later extensions to form the Dining Room and Rear Lobby, we also recommend that small areas of wall plasters/linings are removed to investigate the condition of the sole plate and connecting vertical studwork and if decay is found to be present, similar repairs carried out as for the external walls.

See further comments at **Paragraph 4.30 Damp Proof Course** below concerning separation between the sole plate and brick plinth walls and formation of gravel French drains at the base of the external face of the front and return gable end walls.

Two Storey Rear Extension

External walls measure about 240/250mm in overall thickness and we suspect these are constructed of solid brickwork which has also been cement rendered externally and this has been taken down to ground level effectively bridging any damp proof course on the walls.

The rear ground floor wall is partly enclosed by the single storey extension over the Bathroom and the inner wall is partly enclosed by the lean-to slate roof over the Rear Lobby. There have been typical very slight movements of the external walls which have caused cracking to the cement render and to the rear corner of Bedroom 2 a defective downpipe has caused damp penetration into the wall. Similarly cracking to the rendering the rear of both Bedrooms 2 & 3 has also caused damp penetration into the walls. ***These areas of cracked rendering need to be carefully cut out and re-rendered and we would recommend that a breathable lime based render is applied.*** The application of modern cement renders to original solid brick walls compromises the original breathability philosophy of the walls and does not easily accommodate minor movements and allows cracks to occur with similar consequences to those noted above for the timber frame walls.

There is also evidence there has been some damp penetration to the cement flashing above the Rear Lobby at the connection with the two storey wall above as wallpaper is peeling to the rear corner just below the ceiling line and there is evidence of damp staining to the plasterwork. ***The cement flashing above should be checked over/repaired or replaced with a lead rather than cement flashing.***

Single Storey Extension

External walls measure about 150mm in overall thickness and we suspect these are constructed of about 100mm blockwork which has been cement rendered externally down to ground level (bridging any damp proof course in the walls). These walls provide poor insulation value and we understand that you intend to upgrade these walls as part of your improval proposals including reforming the flat roof over to include the Rear Porch. As part of these works, the walls will need to be upgraded with either a new timber frame or blockwork and skin internally or, alternatively, the walls rebuilt with insulated cavity walls. We noted evidence of dampness to the internal wall plaster which has decayed in the Utility Room and this is reported further at **Paragraph 4.30 Damp Proof Course** below. The rendered external finish has also been affected by surface cracking and this is reported further at **Paragraph 4.20 Foundations and Movement** below.

4.20 Foundations and Movement

We have not carried out excavations to expose the original or subsequent foundations/footings and consider it unlikely that most would conform to current standards. It is possible that the foundations to the two storey and possibly single storey extensions may be more substantial although, given the age of the extensions (at least 60 years), we suspect this is unlikely.

External Cracking

The accessible external walls were inspected externally and, where cracking was noted, this can be generally regarded as Category 1 (very slight) as defined in BRE Digest 251 Cracking and Movement.

Cracks and distortions were noted as follows:-

- **Front Elevation** (south-east) – very slight diagonal/vertical cracks between the front door and Bedroom 1 window and below Sitting Room window into plinth walls and above the right hand head of the front door up to eaves levels.

- **Gable End Elevation** (north-east – original cottage) – the upper gable triangle has moved outwards slightly as a result of historic framework movement. ***We have not been able to verify if the timber frame gable has been correctly secured to the rafters in the roof space and this should be checked.*** Vertical crack at the front corner running the full height allows water penetration as reported above. Very slight vertical crack to the timber frame below the Kitchen window.
- **Side Elevation** (north-east – two storey and single storey extensions) – very slight vertical joint crack at connection of timber frame wall above plinth line, several very slight vertical/diagonal cracks below the Dining Room window and between Bedroom 2 and Dining Room windows, very slight crack at the rear corner below the defective rainwater downpipe and numerous very slight cracks and flaking paint finishes to the single storey Utility and Bathroom walls.
- **Rear Elevation** (north-west – two storey and single storey extensions) – vertical cracks to render at both corners and also diagonal cracks to left hand side of Bedroom 3 window sill.

All areas of cracked rendering should be cut out and repaired with lime based breathable render as reported at Paragraph 4.10 above.

Internal Cracking

The accessible areas of plastered wall and ceiling surfaces were inspected internally and, where cracking was noted, this can be generally regarded as Category 1 (very slight) as defined in BRE Digest 251 Cracking and Movement. Original timber frame walls have been subject to seasonal movements and lath and plaster and patterned wall papers are typically uneven with areas of loose wall paper and plaster behind (see further comments at **Paragraph 7.00 Internal Walls and Partitions** below). Evidence of a typical very slight vertical/diagonal crack to front corner of Bedroom 1 at the Party Wall with the attached property above the picture rail running into the joint of the sloping horizontal ceilings is probably the result of acceptable very slight differential roof and framework movements. ***The cracks will need to be repaired as part of general crack repairs throughout the property. Solid brick walls and areas of damp affected plaster will need repair when external render repairs and damp proofing works have been completed.***

You should anticipate seasonal movements of the timber framework and make provision for repairing of external and internal plaster and render cracks using breathable lime based mortars as and when this arises. This should be factored into long term maintenance budgeting for the property.

There are a number of fruit trees growing in the orchard to the north-east side of the property and a substantial Oak tree near the front boundary at a height of between 12/15m which falls within the potential sphere of influence to affect the front and return side walls of the property. There is also a substantial conifer hedge planted to the rear of the rear yard area and the tall Conifer trees, whilst providing a screen, are too tall and in close proximity to the property. ***The Conifers should be substantially reduced in height and it is also possible their roots may have caused some interference to the underground drainage (see further comments at Paragraph 13.00 Foul Drainage below). We recommend that the Conifer trees and Oak tree are cut back together with all other trees kept in check to prevent them becoming a nuisance to the walls of the property and underground drainage. We recommend before carrying out any works to the Oak tree advice is taken from a competent tree surgeon.***

4.30 <u>Damp-Proof Course</u>

We were not able to find any evidence of a physical damp proof course built into the external walls and, since the external rendering has been taken down to ground level to all external walls this has effectively compromised the effectiveness of any damp proof course. It is evident that the horizontal timber sole plates to the original timber frame walls have been raised up above the ground floor and external floor levels. The covering of the brick plinth walls with cement rendering down to ground level has compromised the original breathability philosophy of the plinth walls and further traps moisture to the underside of the horizontal sole plates which cannot easily breathe through the walls as was originally intended. Similarly to the two storey solid brick walls the bridging of any damp proof course and the application of cement renders externally cause similar problems. The single storey block rendered walls have also been affected by damp penetration and the plasterwork is decaying in the Utility Room to the side external wall under the sink unit.

The accessible ground floor wall areas were tested to skirtings and wall plaster with an electrical conductor moisture meter. We have not been able to test the concealed timber framework comprising the horizontal sole plates and vertical studwork due to wall linings and finishes. However, where most original timber frame walls could be tested within the Sitting Room and Kitchen including the understairs cupboard, readings in excess of 20% and as high as 100% were recorded, similarly to the solid brick walls to the Dining Room readings in excess of 20% up to about 50% were obtained and to the single storey rear extension walls readings in excess of 20% up to 70% in the Utility Room were obtained.

For the timber frame walls, we would recommend that once the condition of the framework is identified, consideration should be given to separating the sole plates from the plinth walls by removing the rendered finishes to the plinths and repointing and repairing the exposed plinth brickwork in lime based mortar to allow this to breathe. A gravel French drain should also be formed at the base of these walls. To the gable end wall where the plinth wall has been refurbished the sole plate should be separated from the plinth brickwork and the rendering to the plinth cut back above the path level and repointed and repaired as necessary in a lime based mortar to allow the wall to breathe.

For the remaining solid brick walls the external rendering should be cut back and brick plinths reinstated and repaired as necessary. For the single storey rear extension walls works to be carried out are dependant upon whether the walls are rebuilt or retained as part of your improvement proposals.

4.40 <u>Windows and Doors</u>

These are described in more detail at **Paragraph 2.30 Accommodation** above.

Windows and doors have been referenced on the attached floor plan and defects found as follows:-

- **D1** – door requires adjustment to operate correctly, the lower frame has decayed, the weatherboard has decayed and needs repair.
- **W1** – the sill is decayed and needs repair. The window was locked and could not be tested and should be checked.
- **W2** – the lower rail and sill is decayed and needs repair. The side hung window could not be unlocked for a test and should be checked.
- **W5** – one cracked pane of glass should be replaced.
- **D2** – the door requires adjustment to close correctly.
- **D3** – the door is very stiff to operate and requires adjustment to close correctly and the lower rail is decayed and needs repair.
- **W7** – the window was locked and could not be operated and should be tested.
- **W9** – the sill is badly decayed and there is only a top vent window which does not provide adequate means of escape in case of a fire and should be altered to a side casement.

In view of the above, all windows should be checked over to operate correctly and decayed framework cut out and replaced.

4.50 External Decorations

Paintwork to the rendered finishes is in poor condition and, on completion of the render repairs/renewals, all external rendered surfaces will require redecorations and we recommend this should be carried out with a breathable lime based paint.

Paintwork to external joinery is flaking and peeling and, on completion of repairs/renewals, all external surfaces will require redecoration.

4.60 Thermal Insulation

Laid between the horizontal ceiling joists of the accessible pitched roof space are 2/3 layers of quilt glass fibre insulation providing thicknesses of between 200/250mm. There is also a foil sheet which has been stapled to the underside of the rafters and the combination of this and the quilt insulation probably provides adequate insulation. Where the foil has fallen away from the rafters this should be re-fixed. There was no evidence of condensation forming within the accessible roof space at the time of the inspection and to the timbers around the roof hatch which could be tested with an electrical conductor moisture meter readings of around 14% were obtained which are generally satisfactory. ***When the foil sheet insulation is correctly fixed, you should ensure that there is an air gap over the insulation to the front and rear sloping ceilings and also consider the installation of roof space ventilation to further reduce moisture levels and the risk that condensation may form within the future or timber infestations reoccur.***

We have not been able to inspect the type or suitability of insulation in the flat felt roofs or the small lean-to pitched roof over the Rear Lobby and suspect this will fall below current standards. We have also not been able to verify whether the roof voids are free from condensation and there is no soffit ventilation around the eaves. ***As and when the roofs are upgraded you should consider upgrading insulation levels and introduce roof space ventilation.***

It is unlikely that the timber frame walls have any significant insulation between the vertical studs. If you wish to insulate the framework, this will involve the removal or either external render or internal plasters and only a breathable insulation material (such as lambs wool) should be installed.

The solid two storey brick walls act as a cold bridge allowing condensation to occur on the inner face at lower levels in corners and edges of rooms where there is very poor circulation of air. Similarly the single storey walls are of only single block construction and have very poor insulation value. ***As part of renovation of the property,***

you should consider upgrading the thermal value of these walls by providing insulation as appropriate.

We suspect that the Party Walls between the properties are of timber framing with lath and plaster finishes, which is typical of properties of this age and construction and some air and structure borne sound transmission between the properties across the Party Walls is not uncommon. All the windows are single glazed and none of the windows have trickle vents to remove residual condensation. ***You should consider the installation of secondary double glazing or replacement double glazed windows to improve the insulation levels. You should also consider fitting externally vented extractor fans into the Kitchen and Bathroom to remove moist air.***

5.00 CEILINGS

Exposed floor joists to Sitting Room and Kitchen have some lath and plaster and some plasterboard and textured finishes between (see further comments at **Paragraph 15.00 Conclusions** below). ***There are some cracks to the original lath and plaster to the Sitting Room which need repair.*** Plasterboard and textured finish to the Dining Room ceiling and Rear Lobby (see further comments at **Paragraph 15.00 Conclusions** below) with previous water penetration near rear door to Rear Porch at Dining Room partition. Textured plasterboard sloping ceilings to Bathroom, Utility and Cloakroom with evidence of usual joint/edge shrinkage cracks which are acceptable. The first floor ceilings to the original Cottage are partly sloping ceilings to the front and rear and comprise textured plasterboard which has replaced the original lath and plaster ceilings (see further comments at **Paragraph 15.00 Conclusions** below). Evidence of typical very slight joint/edge cracks which are acceptable. Sloping ceilings to Bedrooms 2 & 3 have been finished with a textured plasterboard and there is evidence of typical joint edge shrinkage cracks which are acceptable.

6.00 FLOORS

6.10 Ground Floors

Constructed of concrete and the full surface of the floor could not be inspected due to floor coverings. We noted evidence of thermoplastic type floor tiles to the Sitting Room (see further comments at **Paragraph 15.00 Conclusions** below). The floor in the Rear Porch slopes down to the rear exit door. The floor at the front door into the Sitting Room is about 100mm up front the path level, whilst to the gable end wall to the Kitchen the floor is about 840mm above the side path level. Where the floor could be inspected it was found to be mostly relatively level although the floor surface could not be seen.

The surface of the floors was tested with an electrical conductor moisture meter and where tests could be applied into the floor screed through the floor coverings, generally average readings of between 15 -20% were obtained which are acceptable with a property of this age and construction.

6.20 First Floors

To the original Cottage there are suspended timber floor joists which run parallel to the front wall and downstand in the Sitting Room and Kitchen below and comprise about 110mm x 55mm joists at about 350mm centres which have been built into a 180mm x 200mm cross beam running over the Sitting Room which has been built into the partition wall with the Dining Room and into the front external wall. All the joists and beam have been painted black. There is evidence of minor scattered timber infestations possibly from previous woodworm infestations. We were able to expose small areas of the wide boards to Bedroom 1 at the front wall and we noticed the floor falls towards Bedroom 1 Landing partition and there is a typical very slight spring when the floor is walked across. We also noticed a gap between the skirting and floor boards to the left hand side of Bedroom 1 window which coincides with the cross beam to the Sitting Room below and we suspect there have been some historic movements of the beam over the Sitting Room window which are not uncommon.

The floors to the extension to Bedrooms 2 & 3 have also been built of suspended timber and we noted the floor joists run perpendicular to the front wall and have been built into the external rear wall. Where the boards could be exposed there was evidence of possible Victorian floorboards with evidence of some minor scatted timber infestations which we also consider are probably inactive. Floors felt generally level and even when walked across.

Where the floor joists have been built into the solid external walls it is essential that the rendering is kept in sound condition to prevent surface water ingress which could cause decay to the joist ends.

7.00 INTERNAL WALLS AND PARTITIONS

As reported at **Paragraphs 2.00 & 4.10** above, the original timber framework to the external walls and the timber frame partitions to the original Cottage could not be inspected. The framework has been clad with lath and plaster with patterned wallpapers and some of the wallpaper and plaster behind is loose. To the Kitchen plasterboard and skim coat plaster finish has been applied over the timber framing and there are some ceramic wall tiled splashbacks.

The solid brick extension walls have been finished with possibly lath and plaster with some modern plasters with lining papers and emulsion. ***To Bedrooms 2 & 3 the wallpaper is peeling off and the plaster behind is damp from moisture penetration through the cracked rendering and will need repair. There is also evidence of loose plaster in the rear corner of the Dining Room at the gable end wall at the Bathroom which will require repair. There is also damp affected plaster to the Rear Lobby from damp penetration to the cement flashing to the slate roof above at the rear exit door. The plaster to the single storey extension has decayed in the Utility Room under the Kitchen sink and there will need to be extensive re-plastering to these walls if they are to be retained. Some of the tiles to the Bathroom have bulged and are loose at the mid height of the partition wall to the Utility Room and need to be replaced.***

Where wallpapers have been fixed over older lath and plasters, care should be exercised when removing the wall papers as sections of plaster can be pulled away from the walls and an allowance for repairs should be anticipated.

Internal redecoration will need to be carried out on completion of all the renovation works.

8.00 INTERNAL JOINERY

Internal joinery is described in more detail at **Paragraph 2.30 Accommodation** above.

Adjustments are required for internal doors to close correctly.

The staircase handrail is missing and needs refitting. The gaps to the vertical balusters are also too wide and a potential safety hazard for children and need reducing or covering.

Painted timber wide skirtings and moulded architraves are generally satisfactory. ***Skirtings will need to be replaced or treated where damp affected plaster is treated.***

9.00 FIREPLACES AND FLUES

Plastered chimney breast in the Sitting Room and the Dining Room Rear Lobby behind rises through Bedroom 1 (and Bedroom 3) behind and serves fireplaces to the Sitting Room and Bedroom 1 above. The chimney breast has been plastered and papered in both the Sitting Room and Bedroom 1 above. ***To the left hand side of the chimney breast in the Sitting Room there is a very slight rip through the paper and crack through the plaster where there has been some differential movement between the timber frame partition and chimney breast which needs repair. The fireplaces were not in***

operation at the time of the inspection and should these be reused we recommend they are inspected by a chimney sweep and swept before reuse.

The Dining Room fireplace is no longer in use. There are 2 no air vents to Bedroom 2 to ventilate the fire flue and these should be retained.

The balanced flue to the oil fired boiler exits externally to the side of the Utility Room window sill and should be fitted with a caged wire guard.

10.00 ELECTRICITY

Mains overhead supply connects to the front wall and the fuse box/meter is located to the Landing. There is evidence of mostly modern socket outlets and switches and the supply has been extended to serve the Outbuildings to the yard at the rear. ***There was no evidence of a test record for the electrical installation and, in view of the age of the fuse box, recommend an Electricians inspection/test is carried out to advise on the condition of the electrical installation and improvements.***

11.00 GAS

Mains gas is not available for connection to this property.

12.00 PLUMBING AND CENTRAL HEATING

12.10 Cold Water Supply

Evidence of the Water Authority stop box to the front boundary and you should check if a water meter has been fitted. The internal stopcock is located to the understairs cupboard where the pipe is in copper. The type or condition of the underground supply pipe could not be verified.

Situated above the Airing Cupboard in the Bathroom is the rectangular plastic storage tank. ***The removed lid should be refitted.*** We assume the header tank is concealed and could not be inspected.

12.20 Hot Water and Central Heating

The boiler and radiator hot water and central heating system are described in more detail at **Paragraph 2.30 Accommodation** above.

Neither the boiler nor the immersion heater were in use at the time of the inspection. ***The boiler is relatively modern and you should enquire to the Vendors as to whether this was installed by an***

OFTEC Engineer and whether the boiler has been serviced annually thereafter. We understand that the boiler is currently not working because the pump is believed to be defective. ***In the absence of any boiler service record we recommend that the boiler and hot water/central heating systems are inspected and tested by an OFTEC Engineer. There is evidence of rust to the oil tank which should be cleaned down and treated.***

13.00 FOUL DRAINAGE

The sanitary ware is described in more detail at **Paragraph 2.30 Accommodation** above and is generally basic modern sanitary ware. The Kitchen wastes discharge into gulley one (as marked G1 on the attached floor plans). ***The gulley benching needs repair.*** The Bathroom and Utility wastes (4 no. pipes) connect into gulley two (G2 on floor plan). ***This also needs clearing out.***

We were not able to locate any inspection chambers near the Cottage for the connections from gulley's one and two or the Cloakroom WC. We were also unable to find any ventilation and pipes for the foul drainage system. We noted two older/redundant inspection chambers in the rear yard area which do not appear to be part of the foul drainage system.

You should enquire of the Vendors as to whether there are any further inspection chambers nearer the house and these should be made accessible for maintenance purposes. Should the inspection chambers or the drain runs run under the yard area and the tall conifer trees behind we suspect there may be the risk of route interference from the trees and the drain runs should be checked.

The septic tank type installation (as marked on the attached Land Registry Plan) comprises a rectangular concrete/blockwork chamber which we understand serves this and the adjacent attached two Cottages. The tank is a conventional two chamber tank with a baffle wall between. There is a single inspection cover over the centre of the tank over the baffle wall and there is a fresh air inlet to the second chamber connected to the outlet to the outgoing chamber. ***The lifting eyes to both covers are broken and new covers should be fitted. The outlet chamber is full of deposits and requires cleaning. As reported at Paragraph 2.34 above, you should check easements for the connection to the chamber from the attached Cottages and the route of the foul drainage pipes, the arrangements for apportioning the costs for maintenance and repair between the neighbours and whether Environment Agency consent has been obtained to discharge the outgoing water into the nearby ditch.***

14.00 OUTSIDE

14.10 Grounds and Boundaries

These are described in more detail at **Paragraph 2.33 Outside** above.

Your Solicitor should verify the boundary positions and ownerships on all sides of the property.

14.20 Outbuildings

As reported at **Paragraph 1.20** above, these have not been inspected. However, we noticed some broken asbestos-cement sheets to some of the roofs (see further comments at **Paragraph 15.00 Conclusions** below).

15.00 CONCLUSIONS

The main items briefly listed below are shown in ***bold and italics type*** in the main text of this Report for ease of reference.

15.10 Legal Matters

Prior to legal commitment to purchase the property the following should be carried out by a Solicitor:-

1. Confirm boundary positions and ownerships on all sides of the property and Wayleaves for electricity cables passing over the north-east side of the site. (**Paragraphs 2.32 & 14.10**)
2. Confirm the easements, maintenance arrangements and costs for the shared septic tank and whether Environment Agency Consent has been obtained for the discharge into the ditch. (**Paragraphs 2.34 & 13.00**)
3. Confirm whether a Competent Persons/Building Regulations Approval was obtained for the installation of the oil fired boiler central heating system and confirm the annual boiler service record (**Paragraphs 2.40 & 12.20**)

15.20 Further Investigations

The following should be carried out **prior** to legal commitment to purchase the property to budget for the costs of any works which may be required:-

1. Arrange for an Electricians Inspection/Test. (**Paragraph 10.00**)

2. In the absence of the boiler service record and Competent Persons Building Regulations Certification, arrange for the oil fired boiler central heating system to be inspected and tested by an OFTEC Engineer. (**Paragraph 12.20**)

15.30 Repairs

The following should be attended to generally over the course of the next 3/6 months as part of continued repairs and improvements to the property:-

1. Replace missing plain tile to rear roof. (**Paragraph 3.11**)
2. Replace 3 no. broken corrugated perspex sheets and repair cement flashing above Rear Lobby roof. (**Paragraphs 3.11, 4.10 & 7.00**)
3. Inspect concealed front face of main chimney stack. (**Paragraph 3.12**)
4. Reduce secondary chimney stack below flat roof and repair/replace Bedroom 2/3 damp affected plaster. (**Paragraph 3.12**)
5. Repairs to fascias, soffits and bargeboards. (**Paragraph 3.13**)
6. Provide new front downpipe, repair rear swanneck, reconnect rear gutter and downpipe and replace Rear Lobby gutter fascia and pipe all downpipes to appropriate soakaway drainage. (**Paragraph 3.14**)
7. Check over all timbers in pitched roof space for infestations and treat as required. (**Paragraph 3.20**)
8. Expose ground floor timber plinth walls to inspect sole plates and connecting vertical studwork to assess repairs and renewals required. (**Paragraph 4.10**)
9. Repairs and renewals to external rendering. (**Paragraphs 4.10 & 4.20**)
10. Check over timber gable wall in roof space to verify adequate strapping. Reduce height of oak tree and conifers. (**Paragraph 4.20**)
11. Remove renders off timber frame walls to brick plinths, reinstate brick plinths, form gravel French drains and isolate sole plate at plinth walls, remove/cut back render to solid brick external walls and repair exposed brick plinths. (**Paragraph 4.30**)
12. Repairs and renewals to windows and doors. (**Paragraph 4.40**)
13. External redecorations to walls and external joinery. (**Paragraph 4.50**)
14. Make good foil sheet to roof space and install roof space ventilation. (**Paragraph 4.60**)

15. Internal wall plaster repairs. (**Paragraph 7.00**)
16. Re-fit staircase handrail and reduce gaps to staircase/Landing balusters. (**Paragraph 8.00**)
17. Arrange for a chimney sweep to inspect and sweep the Sitting Room and Bedroom 1 fireplaces before re-use and fit a caged guard to the oil fired boiler flue. (**Paragraph 9.00**)
18. Treat rust to oil tank. (**Paragraph 12.20**)
19. Clean out and repair foul drainage gulley's, locate accessible inspection chambers and check condition of pipework and replace 2 no. inspection chamber covers to septic tank. Clean out outlet chamber. (**Paragraph 13.00**)

Bearing in mind the works required, we recommend that quotations are obtained from local building contractors, familiar with working on older properties, for all the above items **before** proceeding with the purchase of the property to more accurately gauge the likely costs to be incurred.

15.30 Long Term Repairs

Long term consideration should be given to the following as part of future maintenance budgeting:-

1. Replace broken/spalled plain tiles and slates. (**Paragraph 3.11**)
2. Replace flat felt roof coverings and upgrade roof space insulation. (**Paragraphs 3.11 & 4.60**)
3. Allow for repairs to plaster and render from seasonal movements to timber framework. (**Paragraph 4.10**)
4. Install secondary double glazing and fit externally vented extractors fan to the Kitchen and Bathroom. (**Paragraph 4.60**)

Some of the above items can be included within your proposals for renovation and improvement at the property, particularly with regard to upgrading of the single storey rear projection walls and roof coverings.

Asbestos-containing materials may be present in the textured ceilings, thermoplastic floor tiles and the corrugated sheets to the Outbuildings. Asbestos as a material, if left undisturbed, should have no adverse effect on health. However, if maintenance of asbestos materials is required (for example cutting, drilling, sanding or removal), this requires the use of Specialist Contractors and careful Health and Safety precautions. For this reason, the costs of such works are often considerably higher than for the treatment of other types of building materials. Asbestos-cement roof sheets are a fragile material and extreme care is required when gaining access over them. It should be noted that, with legislative changes and increases in disposal costs,

the presence of asbestos containing materials may have an adverse impact upon the future value of the premises.

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Director
For and on behalf of Harcourt-Powell Ltd
Chartered Surveyors & Valuers
SUDBURY : SUFFOLK