

HOME BUILDING SURVEY- GLOSSARY OF WORDS

Aggregate Material mixed with Portland cement to form concrete. Fine aggregate is sand, coarse aggregate is gravel.

Air bricks perforated earthenware air vents to provide sub-floor or roof void ventilation.

Amosite Brown asbestos.

Anaglypta Thick embossed lining paper for walls and ceilings.

Anobium punctatum The common furniture beetle, generally the most usual form of woodworm in the UK.

Architrave A moulding around a doorway or window opening. It usually covers the joints between the frame and the wall finish, hiding any shrinkage gaps which may occur.

Arris rail Triangular in section timber used to support close boarded fencing.

Artex Decorative textured coating for walls and ceilings.

Asbestos Fibrous mineral with fire-resistant qualities. Airborne fibres are a known health hazard.

Asbestos Cement Cement mixed with 15% asbestos fibre as reinforcement. Fragile – will not usually bear heavy weights. Hazardous fibres may be released if cut or drilled.

Ashlar Close fitting square cut building stones, often of thin section used as a facing to other materials.

Asphalt Mastic asphalt applied hot in semi-liquid form as waterproof coating to flat roofs, basement tankings and exterior stairways.

Back addition Projecting rear wing of house, termed an outrigger in some areas.

Back land Site with no road frontage surrounded by other development or land in other ownership.

Balanced flue For a room sealed boiler which takes oxygen from the outside air and not from within the room in which it is located.

Ballast Sand and gravel mixture used for making concrete, etc.

Ballustrades Staircase and landing handrails and spindles.

Baluster - A post or vertical pillar supporting a hand rail or parapet rail.

Barge board Sloping timber fascia to roof verge or gable end.

Bark borer Woodworm found only in bark and sapwood, generally harmless.

Battens narrow timber strips supporting tiles on slates on rafters.

Beetle Infestation - Wood boring insects eg woodworm. Larvae of various species of beetle can tunnel into timber causing damage.

Benching Cement work around channel in base of manhole.

Binder Roof timber fixed over joists in other direction as bracing.

Birdsmouth Triangular cut out of roof strut to tightly wedge purlin.

Bitumen Tar like material used in sealants, mineral felts and damp proof course.

Black-ash mortar Industrial ash used instead of sand with cement and lime.

Blown Defective render or plaster lifting from base, hollow and loose.

Bonding Various patterns for laying bricks to maximise wall strength.

Bonnet tile Shaped tile with uplist used to cover hips.

Borrowed light Window in internal wall between rooms, often over door.

Breather membrane Timber framed construction wall membrane allows moisture to escape.

Breeze block Building blocks made of cinders and cement used for internal partitions and inner skin of cavity walls.

Bressumer Beam spanning opening supporting construction above.

Brick on edge For infilling and partition work 75 mm thick.

Building Regulations Statutory control over new building works and alterations.

Calcium chloride Additive mixed in concrete may result in loss of strength.

Calcium silicate bricks Subject to thermal expansion and contraction resulting in cracking.

Calorifier Heating coil of pipework within copper hot water cylinder.

Cantilever A structural projection unsupported from beneath.

Capillary action Upward movement of moisture in walls and floors.

Carbonation Loss of strength to concretes associated with chemical changes and rusting to steel reinforcement.

Casement Opening hinged part of window.

Cast in situ Concrete or other material cast on site within timber or other formwork.

Caulking Sealing to edges around baths and showers.

Cavity wall Two skins of masonry with air gap in between.

Cavity Wall Insulation Filling of wall cavities by one of various forms of insulation material: Beads - Polystyrene beads pumped into the wall cavity, will easily fall out if the wall is broken into or altered. Urea formaldehyde foam - mixed on site, and then pumped into the cavities where it sets. Can lead to problems of dampness and make replacement of cavity wall-ties more difficult. Fibre fill – Inert mineral fibres pumped into the cavity.

Cavity Wall Tie Twisted pieces of metal or plastic bedded into the inner and outer leaves of a cavity wall intended to strengthen the structure. Failure by corrosion or ageing can result in the wall becoming unstable – specialist companies can insert new wall ties.

Cess pit Sealed tank holding sewage requiring periodic emptying.

Cheek Side face to roof dormer or bay.

Chipboard Chips of wood compressed and glued into a sheet form.

Chrysotile White asbestos.

Cob Thick rendered walls built of earth or clay often mixed with straw.

Codes of Practice Non-statutory recommendations for the use of building materials and techniques.

Collar High level roof timber running between opposing rafters to prevent spread.

Combination boiler 'Combi' boiler provides heating and hot water directly from mains with no need for storage tanks.

Common furniture beetle Woodworm commonly encountered in older UK buildings.

Condensation Water condenses on surface when it is colder than the dew point of the surrounding air.

Coniophora puteana A common form of wet rot fungus

Consumer unit Fuse or circuit breaker box controlling electricity supply.

Continuity of cover Insurance cover against subsidence or other risks carried on from one property owner to the next.

Conventional flue Boiler takes oxygen from air in room in which it is located with combustion gasses discharged via flue or chimney.

Conversion (1) Property now used differently, eg flat within former house/

Conversion (2) Chemical change in concrete or other material leading to loss of strength.

Coping Brick, stone or tile finish to top of parapet.

Corbel Projection on face of wall to support end of purlin, beam, etc.

Core sample Drilled out section of concrete or other material taken for analysis.

Cornice Decorative plaster or rendered moulding at junction of wall and ceiling or below external parapet.

Coving Curved or shaped plaster finish between wall and ceiling.

Cowl Shaped chimney pot or terminal on flue to improve efficiency.

Creep Spreading and folding of lead or asphalt on roofs and steps especially due to heat from sun.

Crocidolite Blue asbestos.

Cross wall Wall running from side to side.

Cruk Irregular sections of tree trunk used for rafters and other rough carpentry.

Curtain wall Lightweight thin outer panel wall.

Curtilage Enclosed garden area belonging to dwelling.

Dado Lower part of internal wall to approximately 1m high usually finished with dado rail in form of timber moulding.

Damp proof course A layer of impervious material such as engineering brick, plastic, felt or metal at base of wall to resist rising damp. Remedial methods available from damp proof contractors such as chemical injection, ceramic tube and electro osmosis.

Damp proof membrane Layer of polythene, bitumen or other material in solid floor to prevent rising damp.

Death watch beetle large woodworm found in damp oak and other hardwoods.

Dentil Tile fillet to seal joint at base of stack or parapet.

Detailing Flashings, upstands, soakers and other roof joint weather sealing.

Dishing Sagging to centre of floor or roof slope.

Dormer Window projecting out from roof slope.

Double glazing Sealed units have two panes of glass factory sealed; secondary double glazing has additional window fixed to main window, usually inside.

Double hung sash window - A window in which the opening lights slide vertically within a cased frame, counter balanced by weights supported on sash cords which pass over pulleys in the frame.

Dry rot Most damaging form of fungal attack to damp and also adjacent dry wood with propensity to spread within roofs, floors and panelling.

Easement Right over adjoining property for drainage or other services, etc.

Eaves Overhanging base to sloping roof.

Efflorescence Salt deposits on masonry or roof tiles where dampness evaporates.

Electro-osmosis Proprietary system for preventing rising damp by electrically earthing wall.

Endoscope Borescope for inspecting inside wall cavities, etc.

Engineering brick Particularly strong and dense type of brick, often used as a damp proof course in older buildings.

English bond Alternate courses for all headers and stretchers.

Eyebrow window set into roof slope under curving rows of tiles.

Façade Front elevation of building.

Fascia board Flat board at eaves used to fix gutter.

Fibreboard Soft porous building board used for insulation and lining.

Fillet Sealing of joint at corners using mortar.

Finlock gutters Proprietary name for interlocking concrete gutter system.

Firrings Tapering cuts of wood fixed over joists under decking to provide drainage fall to flat roof.

Flank Side elevation.

Flashing Metal covering to joint of roof and stack or parapet, etc.

Flauching Bedding mortar to base of chimney pots.

Flemish bond Alternate headers and stretchers in each course.

Flight Straight run of staircase.

Flue A smoke duct in a chimney, or a pipe serving a heat producing appliance such as a central heating boiler.

Flue lining Metal tube within a flue – essential for high output gas appliances such as boilers. May also be manufactured from clay and built into the flue.

Flying freehold In England and Wales the ownership of airspace over another freehold.

Formwork Shuttering into which wet concrete is poured to set.

Foundations The below ground construction supporting the walls.

French drain Channel formed around base of walls, often filled with gravel, typically in conjunction with thatched or other roofs which lack gutters.

Frieze Decorated band to top of internal wall below cornice.

Frog Recess in brick to hold mortar.

Gable Triangular upper part of wall from eaves to ridge.

Gang nailed trusses Prefabricated roof timbers fixed with metal plates.

Gauged brickwork Arches and ornamentation in shaped or tapered bricks.

Going Staircase distance between risers.

Gravity circulation Wide bore heating circulation without pump.

Ground heave Swelling of clay sub-soil due to the presence of moisture; can cause an upward movement of foundations in extreme cases.

Grounds Timber battens at base of wall for fixing skirting boards, etc.

Grout Filling of joints in paving and tiling.

Gullies Exterior drains into which water discharges.

Gutter A channel along the eaves of a roof or the edge of a path for the removal of rainwater.

Gypsum Modern plaster material used in plasterboard and for plaster skim.

HAC High alumina cement additive used in concretes.

Hardcore Broken brick, stone, concrete.

Haunching Cement work used to support drainwork and manholes below ground.

Header Brick laid with end showing.

Heave Lifting of foundations due to clay swell or other expansion of support below.

Herringbone strutting Timbers laid in X-pattern between joists.

Hip Junction of two roof slopes.

Hip hook Metal bracket holding bottom hip tile in place.

Hoggin Hardcore.

Honeycombe wall Bricks laid with gaps to allow ventilation.

Hopperhead Collects water at the top of a downpipe.

House longhorn beetle Destructive type of woodworm, mainly confined to southern counties in UK.

Infill Hardcore laid under solid floor.

In situ Applied to work done in the position where it is finally required, eg concrete may be precast in sections and then taken to the final position or it may be cast on site 'in situ'.

Inspection chamber Used to be called a man-hole. Access point to a drain comprising a chamber of brick, concrete or plastic with the drainage channel at the bottom and a removable cover at ground level.

Interceptor Trap in drain.

Interlocking tiles Single lap type with ridged or curved profile.

Invert Bottom of manhole or drain. Invert level is distance below ground.

Interstitial condensation Trapped dampness in airspace in wall or roof.

Jamb Vertical side face to window or door opening.

Joist Timber running parallel to ground supporting floor or ceiling.

Key The roughness of a surface which provides a bond for any application of paint, plaster, rendering, tiles etc or spaces between laths or wire meshes which provide a grip for plaster.

King post roof truss Traditional design with central post (Queen post has two side posts).

Lamination Lifting of surface to tiles, brick, plaster, etc.

Landslip Downhill movement of unstable earth, clay, rock etc often following prolonged heavy rain or costal erosion, but sometimes due to sub-soil having poor cohesion.

Lath and plaster Thin timber strips with wet plaster coatings.

Lintel (Lintol) Beam over window or door opening.

Longhorn beetle (*Hylotrupe bajulus*) A serious insect pest mainly confined to the extreme south-east of England, which can totally destroy the structural strength of wood.

LPG Liquid Petroleum, Gas or Propane. Available to serve gas appliances in areas without mains gas. Requires a storage tank.

Maisonette A flat on more than one level often with own external entrance door.

Mansard roof Has steep slope at bottom often with windows and shallow slope above.

Microbore heating Narrow flexible pipework.

Mineral felt Flat roof covering, usually bitumen based.

Moisture meter Measures electrical conductivity in walls or wood and hence dampness.

Monitoring Observing crack damage and other movement over time.

Mono pitch roof Has only one slope from high wall to low wall.

Mortar Builders refer to it as 'muck'. Various combinations of cement, lime and sand. One part cement to three parts sand, is the strongest and hardest. Weaker combinations preferred for many situations.

Motorised valve Electrical controls on hot water and heating pipework.

Movement joint Gap in masonry wall with flexible sealant to allow movement.

Mullion Vertical division of panes in window.

Mundic blockwork Masonry construction using pre-cast blocks made from mining waste.

Neoprene gasket Extruded neoprene, a synthetic rubber, to hold window glazing.

Newel End post to balustrade or staircase handrail.

NHBC National House Building Council issues certificates for new homes.

No-fines concrete Cast –in-situ concrete walls and floors with no sand aggregate.

Noggins Short horizontal timbers between vertical studs.

Nosing Edge of step or sill.

One pipe heating Central heating water runs in and out of each radiator in turn.

Oversailing Brick or tile courses projecting out from face of wall or chimney

Oversite Rough concrete below timber ground floors.

PRC Pre-cast reinforced concrete.

Pad and beam Foundation comprising concrete blocks set into ground linked by beamwork.

Pantiles Undulating shaped interlocking tiles.

Parapet Top of wall at roof or balcony level.

Parapet gutter A timber gutter of rectangular cross-section usually provided with a flexible metal or other impervious lining. Used behind a parapet or sometimes at a valley.

Pargetting Decorative patterns in rendering to exterior elevations, typically in Tudor or mock-Tudor buildings.

Parging Cement lining around inside of chimney flue.

Party wall On boundary between properties in separate ownership.

Parquet Tongued and grooved, secret nailed, hardwood flooring.

Pebbledash Cement render to walls covered with pebble.

Pegtiles Handmade clay tiles held onto battens by wooden pegs.

Pier Vertical column of masonry to add strength to wall.

Piles Concrete columns driven or cast in subsoil as foundations.

Pillasters Ornamental half columns as a facing either side of doorway, shop front or similar.

Pitched roof Sloping tile or slate roof as opposed to flat roof.

Plain tiles Double lap clay or concrete type approximately 200 mm wide by 270 mm long.

Plasterboard Gypsum plaster sandwiched between two sheets or cardboard.

Plasticiser Added to mortar to improve workability.

Plate Horizontal timber on wall to spread load of joist and rafter ends.

Plinth Widening at base of wall, typically cement rendered.

Plumb Vertical. Hence plumb line to test for verticality.

Pointing External face of mortar between bricks.

Ponding Water lying on flat roofs.

Powder post beetle (*Bostrychide* or *Lyctidae* family of beetles) A relatively uncommon pest which can, if untreated, cause widespread damage to structural timbers.

Pressure grouting Repairs to drains or sunken floor slabs using pumped cement slurry.

Purlin Roof timber running sideways under rafters.

Purpose built Constructed for current use, ie not a conversion.

Queen post Traditional roof truss system with two off centre upright posts.

Quoin External corner of wall.

Racking Sideways shift to timber frame wall or roof.

Radon Radioactive gas emitted from some sites especially granite rocks.

Raft foundation Concrete slab supports walls.

Rafter Sloping roof timber supporting roof slopes.

Random rubble Basic early method of stone wall construction with no attempt at bounding or coursing.

Rat trap bond Bricks laid with gaps between and open central cavity.

Rendering Mortars applied to face of wall.

Retaining wall Holds back land behind and may thus support structures behind also.

Reveal Inner face of corner to door and window openings.

Ridge Top of pitched roof.

Rise Vertical spacing between stair treads.

Riser Vertical form of step.

Rising damp Capillary action causes moisture to rise up in wall or floor.

Rolled steel joist Mild steel section commonly used over openings in load-bearing walls.

Roof spread Outward bowing of a wall caused by the thrust of a badly restrained roof framework (see 'collar').

Rotation Tilting movement of foundation or wall.

Roughcast Unevenly finished external render.

Sacrificial anode Aluminium or other metal in galvanised water tank to reduce corrosion.

Sarking Under felting below tiles or slates.

Sash Sliding inner frame to window.

Screed Cement finish to concrete floor.

Scrim Hessian type material used to seal joints in plasterwork.

Self priming cylinder Hot water tank without header tank.

Septic tank Private drainage system uses bacterial action to process sewage.

Serpula lacrymans The true dry rot fungus.

Settlement Downward movement of structure on site.

Sewer A large, underground pipe or drain used for conveying waste water and sewage.

Shakes Splits and cracks in timbers following grain.

Shear Vertical crack due in part to wall moving down.

Shingles Thin timber tiles used for roofs and wall cladding.

Shiplap Overlapping boarding as cladding to external face of wall.

Sleeper wall Under timber ground floor used to support joists.

Snagging Minor building works to be finished off after practical completion.

Snap headers Half bricks in outer skin of cavity wall replicates solid wall bonding.

Soakaways Land drains and sumps allowing water to drain into soil.

Soakers Metal dressing under tiles and flashings.

Soffit Undersides of eaves behind gutter.

Soil pipe/soil stack A vertical pipe conveys sewage to the drains. Its upper end is usually vented above the eaves.

Soil stack Above ground pipework taking waste water.

Soldier arch Bricks laid on end as lintel to opening.

Solid fuel Heating fuel, normally wood, coal or one of a variety of proprietary fuels.

Spalling Flaking away of surface to bricks and tiles.

Spandrel Space below staircase or over an archway.

Spardash Cement render finished with small white stones.

Spindels Vertical uprights to balustrades and staircase handrails.

Spine wall Internal wall running front to back.

Sprocket Angled timber at end of rafter lifts bottom tiles.

Stitch bonding Repair to brickwork, cutting in new bricks.

Stopcock A valve on a gas or water supply pipe which is used to cut off the supply.

Stramit Insulation boarding made from compressed straw.

Stretcher Brick laid sideways.

String course Horizontal moulding or projecting course of a stone or brick.

Strings Timbers supporting ends of stair treads and risers.

Strutting Angled timbers supporting purlins and rafters.

Stucco Smooth cement rendering as external finish.

Stud partition Timber frame clad in plaster.

Subframe Outer part of window frame fixed to wall.

Subsidence Downward shift of building due to movement in ground beneath.

Subsoil Material below topsoil which supports foundations.

Sulphates Chemicals which can cause deterioration in concretes.

Swallow hole Collapse of subsoil often chalk.

Tanking Waterproof lining to cellar or basement.

Tell-tale Gauge fixed over crack to monitor movement in wall.

Thermoplastic tiles Rigid plastic tiles used in 1950s.

Threshold Sill to exterior door opening.

Tie bar Metal restraint inserted in buildings with end plates on wall.

Timber frame houses Load bearing inner skin timber framed.

Tingles Metal clips holding loose slates.

Torching Mortar applied under slates or tiles to improve weather tightness.

Transom Horizontal division in window.

Trap Bend in waste pipe prevents air from drain passing upward.

Tread Step in staircase.

Truss Timber framework as part of roof construction.

Trussed rafters Method of roof construction utilising prefabricated triangular framework of timbers. Now widely used in domestic construction.

Underpinning Insertion of new foundation base beneath existing foundation.

Upstand Vertical face of flashing or soaker.

Valley Lower intersection between two roof slopes.

Valley gutter Horizontal or sloping gutter, usually lead or tile lined, at the internal intersection between two roof slopes.

Vapour check Polythene or similar material prevents warm damp air entering void.

Verge Sloping edge to gable end wall.

Vertical damp proof course Used at change of level, around openings to cavity and in basements.

Vousoir Wedge shaped block used to form an arch.

Wainscot Wooden panelling below dado height around room.

Wall plate Timber on top of wall supports rafters and joists.

Wall tie Metal fixing in cavity wall connecting two skins.

Wattle and daub Early type of plaster finish for internal walls.

Weatherboard Overlapping boarding used as external wall cladding.

Weep holes Allow drainage from wall cavity or from behind retaining wall.

Wet rot Fungal attack to damp wood especially exterior timbers.

Woodworm Furniture beetle and other wood-boring insects.

Xestobium rufovillosum Death Watch Beetle.

04/10/2016