



Case Study

Case Study: Emergency Chimney Inspection – Rapid Drone Response

When a serious structural incident occurs, time is critical. Image Surveys was recently engaged by a commercial landlord following a dangerous failure at a factory site involving a 150-foot chimney stack. A retaining ring had shattered unexpectedly, with debris falling approximately 140 feet and striking a parked van, resulting in a complete write-off. Fortunately, no one was injured but the risk to life was immediate and significant.

The chimney was located adjacent to the site's main entrance, a high-traffic area for staff, visitors, and delivery vehicles. With the possibility of further structural failure, the landlord required an urgent and reliable assessment to determine whether additional loose material or damage posed an imminent threat. Traditional access methods such as scaffolding or rope access would have taken days to mobilise and could need a road closure meaning additional delays and expense.

Image Surveys responded immediately. Within hours of the initial call, our team had completed all necessary flight planning, risk assessments, and site coordination to enable a safe and compliant drone inspection. Operating within UK regulations, we deployed a high-resolution survey drone capable of capturing detailed imagery of the chimney structure from multiple angles, including areas that would have been difficult or dangerous to access manually.

The aerial survey focused on identifying any further signs of structural weakness, loose components, or cracking around the retaining system and upper masonry. Most of the target area was over 100 feet above ground level.

Within 24 hours of instruction, the client received a comprehensive report outlining our findings, supported by high-definition imagery and recommendations. Crucially, the inspection confirmed whether additional risks were present, enabling the landlord to take immediate and informed action to secure the site and protect those using it.

This project highlights the value of drone technology in emergency situations. By removing the need for costly and time-consuming access solutions, Image Surveys provided a fast, safe, and highly effective inspection service when it mattered most.

For property owners and managers, particularly those responsible for complex or high-risk structures, having access to a rapid-response inspection capability can make all the difference in preventing further damage—and potentially saving lives.

