

SURVEYS GB

Independent Damp and Timber Surveyors

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Ref: G/198
Date: 22/02/2017

Client: Timothy Hulme

Property Address:

Tollgate House
Huntley Lane
Cheadle
ST10

Date of Survey: 22nd February 2017

Weather Conditions: Overcast

Instructions:

To carry out a basic non-invasive inspection and report on the above property in respect of dampness in walls and decay and woodworm infestation to accessible floor and roof timbers.

Property Description:

A two bedroom detached property of mainly brick construction with a pitched tiled roof. Render coatings have been applied to the majority of external walls and therefore a full description of the underlying structure is not possible as part of this non-invasive inspection. We were unable to establish if any form of damp-proof course (DPC) has been installed.

An extension has been added in more recent years forming a ground-floor shower room and study. These walls incorporate a physical DPC.

Orientation:

Situations described facing the front of the property from the road (Huntley Lane).

External observations:

Note: The external render which is in direct contact with the ground to most original walls may not be a breathable or lime-based coating. Older structures often rely on 'breathability' to allow moisture to escape from brick/stonework. Cement based coatings can sometimes trap moisture/condensation inside the structure and result in increased damp staining/salts contamination internally.

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External ground level is raised to the left of the property and is higher than internal floor level, particularly to the left-side wall adjacent to the main road.

Render/decorative coatings to the chimney stack and other patches around the property are in need of attention.

Eaves-guttering appears to be in reasonable condition, however foliage is causing a blockage to the rear downspout.

Rainwater gullies were mostly blocked with leaves/debris.

Sub-floor air-vents around the study appear to be clear and functioning correctly in providing adequate ventilation to the sub-floor area of the suspended floor.

There is cement collaring to the rear section of the lower roof instead of lead-flashings.

Internal Observations:

Extension:

Sun Room:

The suspended floor in this room was covered with laminate flooring, limiting our inspection.

No decay or infestation was found as far as could be inspected.

No evidence of dampness in the walls was found as far as could be inspected.

The front elevation is covered with wood cladding which limited our inspection of this wall.

NOTE: Floors throughout the rest of the ground floor rooms are of solid construction (not suspended timber) and were therefore not part of this report.

Shower Room:

The walls were tiled towards the base of the wall limiting access for our investigation.

There is no extractor fan installed.

Entrance Hall:

No evidence of dampness was found in the walls at the time of inspection.

Lower Roof Void:

A head and shoulders inspection was performed in the roof void due to limited access.

The roof tiles have been under-felted and insulation has been installed.

No decay or infestation was found in roof timbers as far as could be inspected.

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Original Walls:

Dampness/salts contaminated plasterwork is evident to original walls throughout the property including the living room, kitchen, bathroom and area at base of stairs. Instrumental readings indicated higher than normal levels of moisture to the lower section of many of the original walls.

The wall cladding to main section of the living room restricted our inspection of the underlying wall surface.

Plasterwork to the gable wall in the kitchen is clearly affected by dampness/salts contamination where adjacent external ground level is higher than internal floor level. It may be prudent to assume there are similar issues behind the cladding on the same wall in the living room.

There are no functioning electrical extractor fans in the kitchen or bathrooms.

The ceiling to the rear-left corner of the kitchen is cracked/perished, possibly due to lack of adequate lead-flashings externally or previously leaking pipework above.

First Floor:

The timber floors at first floor level including the stairs have carpets fitted which limited our inspection in some areas. Where carpets could be pulled back a scattered infestation of common furniture beetle (*anobium punctatum*) was found, however the infestation appears to be old and no evidence of recent activity was noticed as far as could be inspected.

Roof Void:

A head and shoulders inspection was performed in the roof void due to insulating materials covering the ceiling joists, limiting our inspection of some timbers.

A scattered infestation of common furniture beetle (*anobium punctatum*) was found in some timbers, however the infestation appears to be old and no evidence of recent activity was noticed as far as could be inspected.

The roof tiles are under-felted and the ceiling is insulated.

Conclusion:

Some works have been carried out in the past to combat dampness to the original walls, however there is evidence of dampness/salts contamination in several areas.

The original section of the property has obviously undergone many changes over the years including installation of central heating, less use of open fires, installation of double-glazing and application of none-breathable render/decorative coatings. These measures lead to a build up of condensation within the property resulting in salts contamination becoming more apparent in some walls. (Hygroscopic salts within the structure absorbing moisture from the air).

Furthermore, the raised external ground levels and poor drainage of rainwater lead to penetrating damp, introducing yet more moisture into the property.

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Air-flow should be increased throughout the property to reduce condensation.

It appears that walls of the most recent extension incorporate a physical DPC and are generally free from issues of dampness.

Old scattered infestations of common furniture beetle (*anobium punctatum*) were noticed in timbers of the main house roof and floor timbers at first floor level. No evidence of recent activity was found and therefore chemical preservation treatments are not necessary at this time as far as could be inspected.

Recommendations:

Ideally, external render coatings should be trimmed off at the base of original walls to prevent moisture being absorbed from the ground and to allow the underlying structure to 'breathe'.

It is usually preferable to lower any external ground that bridges internal floor level, however if this is not be feasible due to the close proximity of the road adjacent to the left-side wall, a cavity-drain membrane system may need to be applied internally. Various systems are available and guidelines of BS 7913: 2013 Conservation of Historic Buildings should be followed to preserve the original structure and prevent unnecessary damage. Perished/salts contaminated plasterwork should be removed and exposed walls be allowed to dry-out for as long as possible so that additional salts can be brushed off prior to re-plastering with suitable lime-based materials.

The client would be prudent to seek estimates of cost from companies specialising in preservation of listed buildings.

The client should contact a qualified electrical contractor regarding installation of extractor fans in the kitchen and bathrooms.

The client should contact a local roofing specialist regarding repairs to chimney stack, lead-flashings etc.

All eaves gutters, downspouts and gullies to be cleared of debris to ensure rainwater flows quickly away from the building.

Air-flow should be increased throughout the property to reduce condensation. This can be achieved by various means i.e. installing trickle vents in window frames, electrical extractor fans in the kitchen and bathrooms and venting unused chimney flues.

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Please note:

We have not inspected dampness, woodwork or other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we are therefore unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defect. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of our findings, we accept no liability for any loss howsoever incurred from the use of the information provided. This is not a structural report and must not be construed as such.

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We trust you will find this report of assistance. Should you wish to discuss any points raised please do not hesitate to contact our office.

For and on behalf of SURVEYS GB