

Damp Extracts From Survey

Rear extension - Prior to survey you mentioned that the forward face of this upstand wall was significantly damp stained but, I must report that at the time of this survey, the wall was well presented having evidently been repainted. The staining to which you alluded was almost certainly caused by rainwater running off the coping stones and dripping down onto the wall surface beneath. This small flat roofed area between the pitched roof and the older extension receives little natural daylight and so a persistently damp surface will have encouraged algae to grow. You might expect to have to carry out redecoration here on a more frequent basis than elsewhere.



As will be described beneath under the section on the damp proof course, the ground levels around the perimeter of a house should be maintained at least 150mm beneath the perceived level of the damp proof course. In this case, as a result of the natural slope of the road, the right neighbour's concrete driveway is slightly higher than the surface of the floor in the garage at the subject property. This will inevitably cause water to enter the wall surface and in the long term this will cause the render to fail and fall away in patches as

has been the case here. Despite the recent patch repair the problem will continue and this will be returned to under several headings in the report.

There is a similar problem occurring because of rainwater sluicing off the neighbour's garage roof into a defective gutter which is allowing rainwater to sit against the wall at a higher level. There is causing penetrating dampness in the garage which will also be referred to under other headings. In the longer term you must expect more failure of the render and there is a long term liability for more extensive repairs or even complete re-rendering.



At the back of the house the older parts of the construction are rendered, and spar dashed but the modern brick and blockwork that makes up the ground floor extension has been smooth rendered and painted. The walls here are generally well presented where they could be seen and there was no evidence of any significant cracks, bulges, or other similar structural defects.

Damp proof course:

The original builder will have included a layer of impermeable bitumen in the lower parts of the main walls to help prevent ground water from soaking up and causing damp problems internally. The builder responsible for the older extension may have used bitumen or PVC for the same reason and the contractor responsible for the most modern extension will certainly have used a PVC damp proof course. For any damp proof course to work effectively it must be at least 150mm above ground level, because if it is not then rain and snow can splash up and cause dampness or the DPC can be bridged directly by external features such as paths, patios and driveways.

In this case the ground levels across the front of the house are satisfactory but those to the right hand side are too high. Unfortunately, there is little that can be done about this since the land in question belongs to the neighbour. There is penetrating dampness in the garage because of this and please note that I was not able to record the height of the ground level for the entire length of the right flank because of a lack of access into the neighbour's land.

The ground levels across the back of the new extension are also, on the face of it, too high relative to the position of the damp proof course. However, the whole "point" of the bi-fold doors is that the internal floors are at the same height as the exterior. This causes the contractor responsible for their design and installation considerable difficulties in preventing dampness which might normally be a problem because of the lack of a suitable differential in floor heights.

Prior to survey you mentioned the way in which the patio had been built brought up to the house and the gap which is here is in fact crucial. It is not for decoration, it is there as a drainage gulley to pick up any rainwater that is running towards the house and help prevent floods, let alone excess moisture causing inconvenient dampness. It appears to be functioning as intended.

A possible problem with an extension like this is the blockage of the original subfloor ventilation and this will be returned to under appropriate headings later in the report.

When readings were undertaken with an electronic moisture meter around the inside face of the main walls, the readings that were taken within the habitable rooms in the main body of the house were within acceptable limits. There is evidently a problem with dampness down the right hand side of the garage being caused by high ground levels and direct penetrating dampness.

EXTERNAL DECORATIONS

The property presents well when seen from the frontage road. On a closer examination the cracks in the render and the dampness affecting the right hand flank detract from the overall appearance to some extent and these repairs to the wall surfaces will be both expensive and disruptive to carry out in the longer term.

Surface water

Surface water at the front of the property probably runs out to a soakaway (a large hole filled with rubble) in the front garden although this was not confirmed. Similarly, it is quite likely that as part of the building regulations applicable to the construction of the rear extension, a soakaway was dug in the rear garden around 4m from the back of the house.

DAMPNESS

A series of readings was taken with an electronic moisture meter at intervals around the inside face of the lower part of the main internal and external walls at ground floor level. Most wall surfaces were available for inspection, but some restrictions were placed on my examination by cupboards and other fittings, especially in the kitchen. Where it was possible to take readings in the main house they generally fell within acceptable limits.

Although my opportunities to test the right hand wall of the garage were limited by the sheer amount of material being stored in this area, it was possible to reach through some of the storage and use a damp meter to test the moisture content of the right wall. As expected, this was well above normal limits despite looking quite smooth and tidy where it could be glimpsed. (It was my impression that the garage smelt of fresh emulsion paint at the time of this inspection and so it is possible that this area has been repainted). There are also some areas where the paint and plaster finishes were bubbling at a higher level which corresponded with the neighbouring house's garage roof and gutter.

The garage of this property is suffering from penetrating dampness because of the ineffective disposal of rainwater from overly high ground levels and a malfunctioning gutter detail between the neighbour's garage and the subject property.



Condensation

Condensation is dampness that is caused when warm, moisture laden air comes into contact with cold building surfaces.

The house was not found to be suffering unduly from condensation related damp issues at present but one of the areas that will be most prone to this in the future will be the extension bedroom which has relatively thin walls and a flat roof that is unlikely to have much insulation in it. It is important that this area is kept well heated and ventilated.

The use of the electric ventilator fans in the bathrooms will help to prevent water vapour getting into the main rooms. Please also see the comments made more generally about ventilation earlier in the report.

Defective drains can cause subsidence issues by washing out soil from beneath the foundations. In this case it was not possible to see or investigate the condition of the underground drains. I have recommended that you consider having this done.

GARAGE

The attached integral garage is only just big enough for a small vehicle. It is approached from driveway and there is a pair of wooden doors which are suffering from fungal decay. The painted concrete floor seems suited to purpose but only a very small amount of it could be seen.

There is a concrete ceiling which is a good idea for a garage because this is deemed to be an area where a fire might start and there should always be a fireproof barrier like this between this part of the building and the habitable room above. The rear door should also be a self-closing fire door for the same reason. The current fitting may be of fire resistant specification but the self-closing device has been removed and so I can only recommend that it is replaced.

Further fire regulations also insist that there are no open air bricks that could let burning liquid under the floors and that the garage floor must be lower than that in the house.

The right wall of the garage is suffering from dampness because of high ground levels and defective guttering on the neighbour's property.