

REPORT ON SURVEY

OF THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS

'Sample Cottage'.....

FOR

.....

Date of Inspection: 20th June 2011.

Weather: Bright and dry.

McEwen & Timberlake
First floor, Chequers Parade
Prestwood, Great Missenden
Buckinghamshire HP16 0PN

Tel: 01494 866999



Dear Customer,

In accordance with your instructions we have now inspected this property and prepared the following report in order that you are in a position to consider the condition of the building prior to proceeding with your proposed purchase. As arranged, we are reporting upon the main structure of the building and the appearance of the condition of the services. Therefore, such matters as the accommodation and decorations, fixtures and fittings, gardens and boundaries will not be inspected or reported upon unless there are defects in these causing significant faults in the main structure. The services have not been tested.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Conditions of Engagement agreed with you prior to the inspection. A further copy is attached to the end of this report.

The property was unoccupied at the time of our inspection but fitted carpets, furnishings and personal effects remained restricting what we were able to see of parts of the fabric of the building.

The property will be described as if standing in the road facing the cottage; reference made to front, rear, left and right, also room usage.

Access was gained into the gardens of the adjoining cottage, '*Sample House*', to inspect the lefthand flank wall of '*Sample Cottage*'.

DESCRIPTION

'*Sample Cottage*' was likely constructed in the 17th Century, originally comprising the front rectangular part of the building that is the current entrance hall and lounge together with the accommodation above and possibly with a single-storey rear projection.

The cottage has been extended on a number of occasions. It is difficult to now identify the approximate dates they were constructed. Investigating the planning website of Wycombe District Council there are no applications listed for the property since 1947. Indications are the lefthand rear corner extension of the dining room and bedroom above may have been built in two sections, (ground and first floor) possibly originally with a flat roof, however it is now under a pitched roof.

The kitchen and bedroom above likely date from around the 1930s. The ground floor bathroom, the garage and ancillary accommodation over reveals a number of indicators suggesting it was added in the 1950s, however with no apparent record of any planning consents this may have been built in the late 1930s before the onset of WWII and then introduction of planning control in 1947.

'*Sample Cottage*' stands on a plot which rises slightly toward the rear. The rear garden is terraced. The plot is shallow, backing onto and flanked by gardens of other cottages here within a conservation area.

Princes Risborough market town centre is within one mile, mainline station within two miles.

Enquiries made of the Local Authority via their website reveal the property is not Listed but is within the Conservation Area. Accordingly, the Local Authority has greater control over development and building operations in comparison to an unregulated area.

ROOFS

Description

The main roof is somewhat complex for a property of this size. The front section over the original building is double-pitched and gable-ended, the slopes laying back from front to rear. Over the two rear extensions, roofs are double-pitched and hipped. Their inner-facing slopes meet in a valley between them. Their main slopes lay back into the rear main roof slope.

Over the garage and ground floor bathroom there is a single-pitch leanto roof.

All slopes are clad plain clay tiles hung by their nibs over battens which in turn are nailed through a sarking felt lining to the timbers of the main roof frame.

The frames are of similar construction throughout. It is evident the older areas were mostly renewed probably around fifty years ago.

Aside from the original horizontal purlins which are visible beneath the ceilings in the original building, the old framework was primarily replaced with modern sawn softwood rafters of 100 x 50mm dimension at conventional spacing. They rise from the head of the main walls to the ridge. They are joined by ceiling joists, which in part are still timbers retained from the original frame. The rafters are packed out onto the purlins.

Some additional collars have been fitted between the rafters just above the purlins and therefore above the original ceiling-line.

The first rear extension roof was conventionally formed in similar configuration to the reconstruction over the original building. There are, though, no purlins here. In the later extension where the span of the roof is greater, the standard configuration is assisted by horizontal purlin timbers beneath the rafters at about the midpoint of their span, distributing roof loads to struts which bear upon the internal wall and onto binders nailed over the ceiling joists.

Condition

External

By virtue of the design of the roofs and limited site dimensions, little could be seen of the inner-facing rear roof slopes.

Roof slopes are true; free from evidence of significant sagging or deflection.

The courses of the tiling are even with no significant loss, breakage or spalling of the tiles. The appearance of the tiles varies slightly, for those over the original main roof are machine-made, those of the rear extensions and handmade tiles. This may indicate the roof works were undertaken a few years apart. Alternatively, the handmade tiles were perhaps salvaged from the original building, reused and supplemented with new machine-made tiles to the remaining area.

Slight deterioration of a couple of tiles on the front roof slope is evident adjacent to, and within, the valley at the roof junction between the main roof and the small front dormer roof.

As is commonly found, a couple of the cut-tiles laid at the roof verge have become displaced and the mortar beddings here show some cracking. No urgent repairs are required but this is an area where there will be a need for future maintenance expenditure.

The neighbour's vegetation from the cottage on the righthand side is growing over the lower area of the slopes of the garage and should be removed to allow water to drain away freely. There are indications of some past water penetration through the roof over the garage/store and, accordingly, once the vegetation has been removed the tiling here should be checked and repaired to ensure this area is sound.

The half-round clay ridge and hip-tiles are in place and satisfactory and the mortar bedding beneath them is still free from undue weathering.

Only the outer area of the valley lining between the rear extension and rear main roof slope could be examined. This is to the lefthand flank where the lining exposed is of leadwork. There are indications some repairs have been made here relatively recently. There is, though, a length of the valleyboard beneath the lining which projects and is open to the elements. It will suffer decay over a period of time if not protected.

Concern is expressed over the possible condition of the centre roof valley between the rear extension inner-facing slopes. It is recommended this is inspected from long ladders and appropriate work is undertaken encompassing that noted in the "Internal" section below.

Principally the rafter feet are exposed at the eaves. From ground-level inspection they still appear free from significant damage although allowance should be made for some repair as part of preparation prior to next redecoration.

The plain clay tile-hanging to the main roof gable-ends is generally in place. Just a couple of cut-tiles to the bottom course have become and should be replaced on the next occasion a roof overhaul is executed.

The tile and mortar fillets at the side of the front dormer have been patch-repaired in the past. They are prone to splitting and allowing water penetration. It is recommended they are replaced with a more durable lead flashing on next overhaul.

Internal

It is evident the original frame suffered significant deflection and distortion over the years. The purlins, which are still visible across the ceilings in the original cottage, have suffered deflection and distortion and it is suspected also decay of the ends built into the gable-end walls. Various patch-repairs have been made in the past, particularly to the rear lefthand purlin-end. The older ceiling joists have suffered similar deflection and distortion. These timbers are, though, still effective and support the loads that are applied.

The replacement frame members are free from evidence of significant deflection, splitting or rotation.

Roof frames of collared, or A frame design, such as those in the original building, and in the righthand extension where the ceiling joist tie is above the base of the rafter feet, are prone to lateral pressure from the rafter feet onto the head of the main walls. This can cause deflection of the rafters and outward bulging movements of the main walls. Here there are historic movements, particularly to the front old roof frame and front wall, but no signs of recent flexing, bulging or bowing are apparent. Accordingly, following the reconstruction of the original frame, the roof section over the front of the building appears stable and that to the rear extension shows no indication of significant distress or weakness. By virtue of its limited span and the short un-tied section of rafter, the lateral loads imposed in the extension roof frame are limited.

The sarking felt lining has suffered a minor failure on the rear main roof slope; visible from within the hatch in the first floor bathroom ceiling. A simple patch-repair can be undertaken here internally without resorting to stripping a large area of tiling.

There are indications of perishing of the roof lining in the recent extension roof void where it discharges into the central valley between the two extensions. This requires further investigation. It is suspected the lining at this point has perished due to its age and the effects of collection of water which has penetrated through the tiles over the years at a point where it does not drain well. To carry out a repair will require stripping courses of tiling and should be undertaken comprehensively to a good specification.

CHIMNEYS

Description

There is a single-flue brick chimney stack rising through the top of the front roof slope.

Condition

The stack has bowed slightly although provided appropriate repairs are carried out shortly, it will remain stable and is not considered to be in immediate danger of collapse.

The brickwork has suffered perishing and erosion, also mortar joints are deeply weathered, notably at about half-height. Comprehensive repairs are required to the stack to return it to satisfactory condition.

At the junction between the stack and roof slope a simple tile and mortar fillet is employed. This detailing commonly suffers failure due to the light natural movement which occurs between the brickwork and the roof frame. The fillet is now in poor condition. It is recommended it is replaced with a lead flashing in conjunction with the general repairs to the chimney stack. Flashings of this type are more durable; they are able to absorb the natural movement between the building components.

The fireplace has an original stone chimney breast which reverts to brick through the roof void. It is evident the brick piers to either side of the fireplace opening have been remodelled as part of past extension works. There is a quarry tile hearth. The fire opening is fitted with a smoke-hood. It is evident the fireplace has been in use regularly in the past. The flue should be swept and

checked before use and regularly thereafter. Some of the sealant between the smoke-hood and plate above has broken out and requires repair.

RAINWATER FITTINGS

Description

Rainwater fittings are in PVC material; half-round section gutters hung from brackets fixed to the rafter feet. They drain into PVC downpipes which either run to the ground or discharge openly.

Condition

Some gutter channels are slightly out of alignment, therefore are likely to hold debris and rainwater in places, resulting in overflow during heavy rainfall. They require general overhaul; cleaning and adjusting the channels and ensuring the section joints are watertight.

The downpipes are themselves satisfactory although unnecessary paint finishes applied to those at the rear have failed and are now unsightly.

The centre rear rainwater downpipes discharges into the ground. It is assumed it is then run to a soakaway within the rear garden. The position, size and condition of the soakaway cannot be confirmed without excavation.

The lefthand rear corner downpipe discharges into a water-butt. There is an inadequate overflow arrangement and, once full, the butt will simply overflow during anything other than light rainfall. The resulting water discharge increases the risk of penetrating dampness into the building. Discharge should be made to a soakaway. If a water-butt is required here, an effective overflow must be provided.

Rainwater downpipes at the front of the cottage discharge openly over the pavement. This is not an ideal arrangement, for it will result in slippery, icy conditions during cold weather and add to the extensive water splash-back onto the wall from traffic passing in the road. This is, though, a narrow and little-used lane which should not generate a significant problem in this respect. However, as the property abuts the pavement and has no front garden, this is the only current practical means of discharge.

MAIN WALLS

Description

Main walls in the original part of the cottage incorporate elements of the timber framing of the original dwelling here. At ground floor level much of this framing has been either incorporated in the subsequently built walls or has been removed, likely due to decay over the centuries. The lower areas of the main walls to the original cottage have a thickness indicating they are built-up now using 13.5" thick solid brick. The first floor walls reduce in thickness indicating use of a 9" brick. In the righthand rear extension the wall thickness indicates use of a 9" brick beneath the finishes, whilst in the ground floor bathroom/garage the wall appears to be constructed in a solid concrete block.

The lefthand extension wall thickness indicates likely use of 13.5" solid brick.

All external wall faces are rendered and painted.

Condition

Without removal of areas of rendering or plastering the precise nature of construction of the walls of the various sections of the building cannot be positively confirmed.

The rendering shows surface cracking externally in a number of locations, principally vertically between the first and ground floor window openings, together with some diagonal cracking on the rear wall of the righthand extension. Some hollowness of the rendering was identified either side of these cracks, but generally the render is still sound; firm and free from significant detachment. The surface is uneven in places suspected due to repair over uneven brickwork beneath but, with repair of the cracks to prevent water penetration into the wall, the render will be still effective.

The rendering should not be taken down direct to the ground as is the case on virtually all elevations. It should be cut away at floor level and flared out to form a bellcast drip to prevent dampness rising behind the rendering by capillary action. Please see comments in later sections of the report.

The replacement rendering on the original building, the first extension and later extension, all appears to be a modern cement type rather than a traditional lime. This is suspected to be one reason for the cracking in the rendering. It is due to the inability of the relatively brittle cement render to absorb light movements which will occur in the older flexible wall structure it is adhered to. Cement renders also have a further negative feature in that they do not allow the building to breathe. Being impervious, any water which penetrates through their surface, ie through the cracking or around window and door frames, remains trapped where it can decay built-in timbers. Also, retention of water creates a situation where internal finishes will be damaged. With the potential for there to be some of the old framing timbers still in place in the original buildings, no guarantee can be given as to their condition without major works to open up the structure for full examination.

Clearly, to re-render the whole property in traditional materials would be a very time-consuming, disturbing and expensive operation. The majority of purchasers would simply undertake repair on an ad hoc basis.

There is an historic bulge on the front wall of the cottage at first floor level despite the lateral tie at this point where the first floor joists are built-in. Indications are any movement here has been very slight in recent times although has broken the plaster around the joist-ends and the front wall in the lounge. As part of a general overhaul of the cottage it is recommended some modern ties are fitted through the front wall into the joists to provide improved restraint at this point. Use of stainless steel Helical rod and resin technology will minimise damage and repair of the rendering.

Lintels over window and door openings are mostly concealed and cannot be inspected. The exposed timbers over the front first floor bathroom window still appear satisfactory from ground level inspection but do require redecoration to maintain their condition. Where water has penetrated the rendering or rising dampness is present, built-in timbers such as lintels will be at risk of decay and to the affected areas their condition can only be positively confirmed by physical exposure.

No current above ground evidence of significant settlement or subsidence of the walls was identified.

It is evident the original building suffered movement, settling to the righthand side, suspected due to the gradual deterioration and decay of the framing in the early years of its life before the brickwork was built up.

INTERNAL WALLS

Description

By virtue of the addition of the extensions, various lengths of original and extension walls are now internal.

The original rear wall between lounge and dining room has been removed. Indications are the ends of the first floor ceiling joists have been supported upon a steel concealed within the downstand beam.

The wall separating the ground floor bathroom from the kitchen is about 140mm overall and therefore suspected either single-skin brick or concrete block.

The internal partition wall between the bedroom in the original section of the building and the bathroom incorporates the original front to rear tie-beam, roof collar, struts and diagonal braces. The areas around and below the framing are infilled with brickwork or blockwork.

The partition between the first floor bathroom and landing is timber stud frame, about 100mm in overall thickness, clad fibreboard.

Condition

The internal partition walls are still true; free from evidence of significant recent structural movement. It is evident the original roof tie-beam was cut to form the current internal layout. A tie-beam does perform an important function, providing a lateral tie across the head of the main walls. Severing this timber can allow significant movement to occur although here no indication of distortion or damage since this work was undertaken has been revealed.

The partition wall to the first floor bathroom is somewhat basically-finished, nonetheless is effective for its purpose.

DAMP PROOF COURSE AND DAMPNESS

Description

No damp proof course would have been incorporated in the walls of the original building. It is also unlikely any damp proof course was built-in when the lower areas of wall were bricked-up.

Any damp proof courses incorporated in the construction of the extensions are concealed by the rendering.

The presence of the filled drill-holes in a horizontal line close to ground level in the rendering externally is a sign a modern silicon injection damp proof course has been installed at some point in the past. Enquiries should be made to identify if any documents are available in respect of this work and, in particular, whether there is the remainder of any longterm warranties which can still be transferred over to you. Please note for any warranties to be effective the company concerned must still be trading or the warranties will need to have been insurance-bonded.

As the gardens of the neighbouring cottage to the lefthand side abut the cottage wall and are about one metre above the internal floor level, there is also a need for a vertical damp proof barrier along this elevation.

Condition

Random moisture meter readings taken at low-level in the main and partition walls were generally acceptable; within normal air-dry limits, indicating freedom from significant rising dampness, with the main exception of the kitchen where, upon the lefthand internal flank wall and rear wall, readings were excessive, both at low and high level. Dampness here is considered to be caused by a combination of rising dampness and also penetration of water through the cracks in the rendering externally. The render repairs can be undertaken by a competent general builder, but damp proofing works should be undertaken by a specialist contractor who must include replacement of the internal plaster finish with appropriate salt-resisting additives to prevent the hygroscopic salt contamination now in the wall leaching through and damaging the new finishes. Whilst contrary to the purist view of returning a cottage to its original condition with lime plaster internally and lime rendering externally, it is considered appropriate for this building where an isolated area of dampness is present and requires control at this point in time.

In the understairs cupboard readings were high on the meter just beneath the quarter-landing whereas at floor level they were satisfactory. This requires further investigation. It is suspected dampness in this wall may be leaching out where the staircase is installed and therefore the timbers could now be at threat of decay.

Please note the flank wall in the dining room is lined with plasterboard and therefore readings taken here may not be representative of the moisture content of the wall structure behind. There were, though, no indications of any significant penetration through to the lining or internal finishes.

Where the boundary walls abut the building there are no indications of a vertical damp proof course built-in, accordingly there is a risk of direct damp penetration.

On the morning of inspection the overflow from the ground floor bathroom WC was running, saturating the rear and garden wall. This will result in direct damp penetration if allowed to continue.

There is a damp stain on the landing ceiling. This area was dry on the morning of the inspection after a couple of weeks of heavy showers. Similarly, in the loft storage area over the garage accessed from the rear righthand bedroom, the decoration deterioration and evidence of past water penetration tested with a meter recorded satisfactory air-dry results.

Penetrating dampness is occurring through the lefthand flank wall, suspected mainly through the cracking and poor area of render over the flank lounge window opening. Repairs are required here. Whilst this penetration continues there will be a risk of decay of built-in timbers and deterioration of the internal plaster finishes. Where affected the internal plaster will be damaged and will require renewal as noted in the section below.

WALL FINISHES

Description

The inner face of the main walls and internal partition walls are predominantly plastered.

The dining room lefthand flank wall is dry-lined with plasterboard. The finish upon the timber frame first floor bathroom partition is fibreboard.

Condition

The plaster finishes have suffered general minor splitting and cracking, for example around the joist-ends at the front of the lounge, and will require a good standard of general preparation prior to redecoration, but overall they show no significant perishing or detachment with the exception of the area affected by dampness.

Where affected by dampness the existing wall finish will need to be stripped back to the masonry and replastered, as discussed in the previous section.

There are inadequate areas of wall tiling around the sanitary ware at present but, clearly, you will wish to upgrade the bathroom and you have explained you wish to convert the ground floor bathroom into a utility room.

The fibreboard finish on the first floor bathroom partition is relatively frail and prone to impact-damage. It is recommended it is replaced in modern plasterboard.

FLOORS

Large areas of the floors were concealed from inspection by fitted carpets, quarry tiles, vinyl coverings, furnishings and personal effects.

Description

The ground floor is of solid construction. There is a slight change in level rising toward the rear of the cottage. Varying style quarry tiles are laid in the hall, kitchen and ground floor bathroom.

An open-tread hardwood staircase rises from the ground to the first floor.

The first floor is of suspended timber construction. Within the original part of the cottage the square-section joists and their centre spinebeams are exposed. Floors in the rear extensions are laid with boards on joists. Indications are the lefthand rear bedroom floor is supported on a central beam now boxed-in in the dining room below.

Condition

Ground floors are generally firm and even. They slope slightly in places but this is well within acceptable tolerances for a property of this age and type.

Random moisture meter readings taken into the floor surfaces were generally satisfactory indicating freedom from rising dampness.

The staircase, although effective, will not comply with current regulations for new construction by virtue of fully open risers beneath the treads and lack of baluster rail. It will be important for protection to be provided. Additionally, there is inadequate protection for the area of galleried landing; the corner newel post and panelled baluster section are too low. Modifications are required.

By virtue of the historic movement of the building over the years the first floors do slope, in particular that in the bathroom. There is slight bounce in the floor in the bedroom in the original building. This is, though, within acceptable tolerances and with reasonable-sized joists and spinebeam below should not be a significant issue. Whilst the spinebeams are suspected original the joists are replacements. The lefthand spinebeam bears over the flank window in the lounge. A small amount of rotation of the beam has occurred here but there are no indications of significant distress or weakness which would reveal inadequate support.

In the rear lefthand bedroom the floor has a noticeable drop toward the centre of the room. As indicated earlier, it is suspected it is now supported on a front to rear beam beneath, although a little give is still apparent underfoot. It is, though, considered to be controlled.

Where floorboards are exposed there are normal shrinkage gaps between boards and boards/skirtings.

CEILINGS

Description

Some old lath-and-plaster ceilings still exist, for example in the lefthand front bedroom in the original building. This is plaster forced between slender wooden laths nailed to the underside of the joists and rafters.

Ceilings are fibreboard in the first floor bathroom and on the landing, also to the original ground floor area of the cottage where they are laid over the exposed floor joists. Elsewhere ceilings are plasterboard with a smooth skim plaster finish.

Condition

Lath-and-plaster ceilings fail when eventually the plaster loses its key to the laths. There is evidence of some detachment of the older lath-and-plaster ceilings which are still in use here although with care they will have some years further serviceable life.

The fibreboard ceilings are somewhat unsightly and, where used over larger areas such as the landing, have sagged and are cosmetically poor. It is recommended consideration is given to replacement of those areas which can be simply renewed, ie on the landing and in the first floor bathroom. Where they are laid over the ground floor joists, replacement would be more difficult and time-consuming.

In the dining room the ceiling panels which are believed to be of plasterboard have sagged significantly and it is surprising they are still reasonably firm. The ceiling here is, though, visually poor and it is recommended consideration is given to replacement. In the kitchen the joints of the plasterboard sheets are covered by battens; effective but now somewhat unsightly.

Elsewhere the ceilings are in still satisfactory condition. (Please see comments under "Garage" regarding the ceiling finish in the store above).

DOORS

External

The front entrance door is painted panel softwood in a softwood painted frame over a hardwood threshold with waterbar. It operated satisfactorily and is free from evidence of significant decay.

At the rear of the dining room and kitchen there are painted softwood small-pane single-glazed French doors hung in painted softwood frames over hardwood thresholds. The dining room door is suffering deep decay to both doors and frame and requires complete replacement. The kitchen door is suffering decay to elements of the frame and the doors are no longer a particularly good fit. They could be overhauled and retained, though, if required. Replacement of these doors with the dining room doors would, though, be prudent and avoid the need for future continuous repair.

Internal

Internal doors are of varying age, type and style. There are small-pane glazed painted softwood, painted softwood boarded, ledged and braced, and panel painted softwood. The door panels to the front righthand bedroom have split. This door frame is out of square. This movement occurred many years ago, though, and the door was cut to fit this frame and still operates satisfactorily.

The door to the rear lefthand bedroom is quite flimsy and has warped, but is still effective.

The first floor bathroom boarded, ledged and braced door was not of particularly good quality, nonetheless is still effective.

WINDOWS

Description and Condition

The hall projecting bay window is painted softwood small-pane glazed over a hardwood threshold. It supports the lead covered flat roof which continues to form the entrance canopy. The window is suffering decay of the joinery to the lefthand side, but elsewhere appears sound. The decayed section can be repaired. A repair is also required where the canopy has rotted where exposed at the righthand corner. When this work is executed the lead covering on this roof can be neatly dressed back into place where it has lifted and ridged, thereby extending its lifespan.

The small window/door from the store over the garage to the front is painted softwood small-pane glazed. One of the glazing panes is cracked and requires replacement.

The front cupboard adjacent to the fireplace has a painted softwood fixed light with a pair of bulls' eye glass panes. This is suffering decay and it will likely prove effective to replace rather than attempt repair. It is recommended the sill of this window is extended to ensure any rainwater falling here is discharged away from the head of the wall, avoiding a risk of water penetration.

Remaining windows are Crittall metal single-glazed casements hung in softwood subframes with hardwood sills. Generally the metalwork is free from evidence of significant corrosion and the panes are not suffering typical cracking damage as a result. Some opening lights do, though, require adjustment in order that they close effectively, eg original bedroom, and a number of the window latches require replacement or repair.

Frames of the flank lounge window and front bedroom window above are decaying, as is that to the rear lefthand bedroom. It is evident decay is also setting in to the subframes and sills elsewhere, with evidence of past repairs undertaken to cut out and replace sections of rotted timber. Whether it would prove cost-effective to repair and overhaul the windows or replace them would require further invasive investigation. Replacement of the lefthand flank windows is considered essential. There is a possibility those at the front and some at the rear could be retained although it is recommended consideration is given to replacement to enhance insulation and reduce draughts and also future maintenance costs.

At present there are no extractor fans in the kitchen or bathrooms. It is recommended they are installed to remove excess generated water vapour and thereby assist in the control of condensation.

INSULATION

Insulation quilt has been laid over the upper area of flat ceilings. It will be beneficial but is now below current standards for new construction and ideally would be upgraded.

Without opening up the structure it is not possible to identify the level of insulation, if any, laid between the rafters.

In roof voids which are sealed with an impervious sarking felt lining and insulated there is a need for ventilation to withdraw potentially-damaging condensation. With the current relatively modest level of insulation present, the risk of condensation is low. On upgrading the insulation, positive ventilation of the roof void will be required.

SERVICES

The services have not been formally tested but a visual assessment made.

Electricity

Mains electricity is connected to a dual-tariff meter and multitude of consumer units in the garage. They range from older wired-cartridge units which appear to serve the night storage heaters through to a more modern micro circuit-breaker replacement type serving the general lighting and power circuits.

PVC sheathed cables run to the various lighting points, 13amp socket outlets etc.

Only limited work has been undertaken to the electrical circuits in recent years. The wiring is principally surface-mounted and the majority of the surface fittings date from around fifty years ago. Allowance should be made for expenditure on upgrading the installation to include modern safety features such as mains-powered smoke alarms, and to provide sufficient socket outlets for modern needs.

The Institute of Electrical Engineers recommends residential electrical circuits are tested ten years after installation, on a five-yearly cycle thereafter and upon change of ownership.

Please note any significant works carried out to domestic electrical systems require either Building Control application or must be undertaken by an electrical engineer qualified to self-certify his own work.

Gas

Mains gas is connected to a meter in the garage. Supply pipes are run in galvanized iron and copper tube to the appliances.

No surface significant fault was noted but the supply pipework is now of some age and it is recommended it is replaced as part of comprehensive modernisation of the cottage.

It is important only Gas Safe Register engineers are employed to undertake repair or servicing upon gas appliances.

Water, Domestic Hot Water and Central Heating

The external water stopcock was not located. The internal stopcock is at low-level in the corner of the lounge. This valve was stuck and could not be operated. It should be freed in order that the supply can be isolated in an emergency or to carry out repair.

Where visible, plumbing is in copper tube. There is a PVC water storage tank in the roof void of the most recent extension. The tank has insulation quilt wrapped around to prevent freezing.

Domestic hot water supply is provided by a pair of factory-insulated copper hot water cylinders via electric immersion heaters. One cylinder is within the front bathroom cupboard, the other in the rear righthand bedroom airing cupboard. Both are controlled only by basic timers. It is suspected both cylinders and immersion heaters will now be into the second half of their serviceable lifespan. Both timeclocks will be noisy in operation. Consideration should be given to installing a new hot water system, possibly incorporated into a new heating system.

The tank in the rear bedroom stands on a sheet of fibre cement. This is likely to incorporate asbestos material and, accordingly, appropriate handling and disposal should be undertaken in accordance with current legislation/Health & Safety guidance.

Space heating is not comprehensive. It is provided by an electric night storage heater in the front lefthand bedroom, wall-mounted Baxi Brasilia balanced-flue, gas convector heater in the rear lefthand bedroom, small electric convector heater in the bathroom and then, on the ground floor, electric night storage heaters in the hall, lounge and dining room with a further Baxi Brasilia gas convector in the lounge, and a large night storage heater in the kitchen.

These appliances generally appear to be of considerable age. They have not been tested. Their future life is considered questionable. As part of general modernisation of this cottage it is recommended consideration is given to installing a new gas-fired radiator heating system.

Drainage

Kitchen ground floor bath and basin wastes are run to an external gully. First floor bathroom wastes are collected by a part internal, part external soil vent pipe. There is a further PVC vent pipe at the rear.

Underground drains are in stoneware pipe.

The only inspection chamber on the underground system is at the rear on the run between the vent pipe and first point of discharge. Accordingly, the channels could not be investigated where water could be flushed through. It is suspected the discharge may be run from rear to front beneath the bathroom/garage or, alternatively, through the site of the adjoining property. Legal enquiries may shed further light upon the route of the drainage system.

It is assumed discharge is to the public sewer in the road.

OUTBUILDINGS

The structure of the **garage** has been described in the foregoing sections. The floor is a mixture of materials including brick-on-edge, some cobbles and concrete which is a little uneven. The existing door to the accommodation is not of appropriate fire-resisting standard and requires replacement.

Dampness penetrates into the garage from the higher floor level behind, accordingly, it should not be used for storage of perishable goods.

Panelling upon the garage ceiling and the internal wall appears to be of fibre cement sheeting. This is likely to incorporate asbestos fibres. Accordingly, before it is disturbed, for example by drilling or sanding, appropriate formal testing should be undertaken. As it is on the walls here and in a position where damage and disturbance is likely to occur, it is recommended it is removed. Whilst undertaking a thorough renovation of the cottage complete removal is desirable.

In the store above, the hardboard panelling to the wall and ceiling is now in poor condition.

WOOD-BORING BEETLE INFESTATION

A number of the timbers visible within the building have suffered past wood-boring beetle infestation. No current indications of activity were noted, therefore it is not necessary or, indeed, desirable to apply chemical treatments now.

GENERAL REMARKS

The structure of this cottage has been repaired, altered and adapted over the years. It is evident little maintenance or modernisation has been carried out within the last twenty five years or so and, accordingly, there is now a requirement for a further capital sum to be spent on the house to maintain its condition.

The building has, to an extent, suffered from the use of modern cement materials on external rendering and internal damp proofing works, creating issues with water penetration through render cracks and difficulties with dampness control internally. However, to rectify this by reverting to traditional materials and principles would require very extensive, disruptive and expensive works, considered, on balance, to be unwarranted at this point in time unless a totally holistic approach is being taken to the renovation of the cottage.

The principal points revealed by the inspection are summarised below, but should not be taken in isolation:

- 1) A general minor overhaul is required of the roof.
- 2) A check should be made of the central valley lining and appropriate repairs made in conjunction with repairs required to the felt underlay at this point.
- 3) Comprehensive repair is required to the chimney stack.
- 4) It is recommended modern systems are used to tie the front wall to the first floor joists to enhance lateral restraint.
- 5) Works are required to control a combination of rising and penetrating dampness. It is recommended a specialist contractor is employed for this work where appropriate.
- 6) The staircase requires upgrading to improve safety.
- 7) Poor and damaged ceilings require upgrade.
- 8) Ideally both rear French doors would be renewed.
- 9) Ideally the existing Crittall windows will be replaced, the others overhauled. As a cost-cutting exercise some of the windows could be retained, however it is suspected this would prove to be false economy, even in the short term.
- 10) A comprehensive upgrade of the electrical circuits is required.

- 11) As part of a full renovation of the cottage installation of a new domestic hot water and heating system is desirable.
- 12) The internal garage door must be replaced with a new fire-resisting type.
- 13) The asbestos cement panelling in the garage should be removed. This work is controlled and appropriate contractors should be engaged.

In addition to the works noted above, general modernisation of kitchen and bathrooms and improvement and in the internal and external presentation are required. A number of minor repairs and idiosyncrasies were noted during the inspection but are not considered appropriate to schedule in this report. There are, though, areas where, to bring the presentation of the cottage to a good standard, urgent expenditure will be required. Examples are where part of the original ground floor bathroom skirtings have been buried by new tiling and rough threshold upstand to the kitchen internal door threshold.

We can give no warranties as to the absence of decay or wood-boring beetle infestation in unexamined timbers.

This report has been prepared for you alone as our client and should not be passed to any third party without our written consent. You may, however, feel free to discuss its contents with your professional advisers assisting you in this matter.

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M J Timberlake, FRICS

23 June 2011