

Ref:DampReportExample
Happy Customer



SPOTLIGHT SURVEYS LTD

1 Strettit Gardens
East Peckham
Tonbridge
Kent TN12 5ES

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07449866267

david@spotlightsurveys.co.uk

Dear Happy Customer

1 NEW ROAD, CROYDON CR0 1DP

DAMP SURVEY REPORT

We were instructed by Happy Customer on 17 February 2017 to undertake building survey of the rental property 1 New Road. The report evaluates defects that have arisen from a valuation report undertaken for a mortgage. This identified there was an underlying damp issue throughout.

The weather was fair during and the day before the survey (being unseasonably warm for February).

1.0 THE PROPERTY

The property comprised of a typical “two up two down” Victorian terraced home comprising of a concrete tile roof on a timber roof structure with black under felt and brick built firewalls, externally detailed with lead flashing. The walls were solid 9” masonry walls, suspended timber floors with the subfloor void and is a rear extension having a concrete floor only. The mains water installation ran under the floor to the ground floor kitchen and bathroom.

We did not see evidence of a damp proof course at the rear however there was a rendered upstand that could contain a chemical injection damp proof course, furthermore you have told us that you had a damp proof course installed a number of years ago.

The current tenant has been resident at the property approximately 5 years.



2.0 LIMITATIONS

During our survey we were limited to what inspections we could make, these comprised of:

- Rear roof structure: We were not able to access the rear extension loft space as this had no loft hatch. We would have not been able to make suitable remedial works (or been cost effective in doing so).

3.0 REPORTED DEFECTS

The property has black mould appearing to every surface in the home.

Previously the tenant had complained about the black mould, this was identified as a use issue with the property. As a result over the past 5 years the tenant reported keeping the heating on constantly and leaving the windows open to alleviate the problem. The tenant had also removed black mould with a weak bleach solution and decorated over prior to us arriving. This is the standard method of cosmetic black mould removal.

4. OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The reported defects in section 3.0 are more serious than they seem prompting the inspection, we have considered the areas individually for simplicity.

4.1 Roof Space

The roof structure comprised of a series of timber roof joists with a layer of black felt between the joists and the tiles. There are numerous purlins supporting the roof joists and timber struts transferring the load onto the central load-bearing walls, either side of the staircase. The loft space has been partially boarded out with ply for storage.

During the survey we noted that this roof structure was in generally good condition commensurate. The ventilation between the front and rear the property in the loft space was particularly poor.

We did not note any rotten timbers within the loft however the measured moisture content is high (20%) would make decay possible if no remedial works are undertaken.

We feel the damp timber experienced is caused by condensation within the loft space at this stage and the other marks are from historic water ingress.

4.2 Sub Floor Void

We removed two sections of timber of floor at the bottom of the stairs and one underneath the stairs. The space underneath the stairs was large enough to enter the void. This is separated into three voids denoted by the load bearing walls. Access is via two small holes (approximately 0.5m²) between the voids. The timber floor structure was completely visible (with the exception of timbers placed next to walls). The structure is built into the walls, timber on wall plates and joist hangers. There has been a section of replacement timber at the rear. The ground is built up of gravel, lime and clay.

Our survey identified the following shortcomings:

- Sitting water. There was a significant amount of water within this void. We would normally expect the ground to be damp however this was visibly puddling. With this amount of water in the ground rising damp is inevitable.
- Dry rot attack. The timber in the kitchen has a dry rot attack with a large fruiting body. This affects half the floor of the kitchen and extends into the cupboard.
- Cross ventilation. The cross ventilation of the space was particularly poor which reduces the amount of moisture removal. The load bearing walls act as barriers at the front and rear.
- Mixture of ground levels. The ground levels under the floor had a mixture of different heights.

There are many possible causes for this water ingress:

- Leaking/blocked drain. We could not identify any drain covers during the survey however if a drain has broken it will allow water to seep into the ground and areas around the property.
- Leaking water main. There was a poorly supported water main in the void, this comes in cold under the ground therefore condensation was, masking any leak. This should be checked for leaks by a plumber.
- Adjoining owner's defects. The adjoining owner could have a leaking drain or water main.
- Natural ground water. The area under the property is much lower than the surrounding ground and the water would naturally fall to the lowest point.
- Chimney. The water ingress under the floor appeared to be worse around the chimney, if this is not correctly capped off this could be an additional source of water ingress (however we feel this wouldn't be the main cause).

The water had caused consequential damage, especially to the rear section of the property floor all the timbers were saturated meaning that damp and decay was inevitable. We saw a large section of dry rot fruiting body to the rear section of the kitchen it is likely that 70% of the kitchen floor will have to be replaced. This will extend to all of the timber underneath the stairs. You must allow for all effected rotten wood to be removed beyond 1m of the affected area. Remaining timber will need to be treated by a specialist.

4.3 Other Defects

The kitchen contained a mechanical extractor fan however the bathroom did not.

5.0 RECCOMENDATIONS

To proceed we recommend undertaking the following steps to further investigate the issue (with a view to resolving the defects).

1. CCTV Survey. The drains will be shared if used by more than one property. Therefore the water board should be contacted to arrange a CCTV survey. This is free for public drains however if extended to private drains a fee will be applicable. This will identify if the property or neighbours property is at fault. You must contact "Thames Water" for this.
2. Tracing a water leak. We would recommend a plumber check the installation.
3. Ensure chimneys are capped.
4. Groundwater removal. We would recommend an electric pump is installed to remove ground water if items 1,2, 3 and 4 have been completed. A mini sump pump should be installed such as "Mini Basement Water Sump Pump (50ltr capacity) Smartsump". This should not be installed without extensive investigations of the drains and water mains to the property and adjoining properties.
5. Improved floor void ventilation. Floor cross ventilation can be improved by reducing the amount of rubble in the void and replacing isolated bricks with air bricks in the rear elevation (1no. additional) and in the load bearing walls under the floor (4no. required).
6. New chemical injection damp proof course to the perimeter the building especially the internal walls if items 1,2, 3 and 4 have been completed.
7. Dry Rot infestation. Once the leak has been resolved the dry rot infestation will need to be cut out and removed extending beyond 1m of the last effected section. Specialist timber treatment company should then treat the remaining timber of that element.
8. Increase loft space ventilation. You must increase the loft space ventilation with additional vents in the soffits.
9. Further inspection of rear loft space. The rear loft space should have an inspection hatch cut with an inspection made of this element.
10. Installation of bathroom vent. The bathroom has no ventilation beyond an open window, this should be installed to allow the water vapour to escape.

Once these items have been addressed then the same constant heating and ventilation should be employed to minimise condensation. The existing mould should be removed with a weak bleach solution and allowing for redecoration if required.

We trust the above is acceptable. Should you have any queries please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely

David Willis BSc (Hons) MRICS

Director



Photographic Schedule



Photograph 1: Access made to access under floor void.



Photograph 2: General view of front floor void with excessive rubble.



Photograph 3: General view of rear void, sump located to the rear of the blue bag.



Photograph 4: General view of rear void, sump located to the rear of the blue bag.



Photograph 5: Dry rot effected timbers.



Photograph 6: Close up of sump void.