

Section D CONSTRUCTION AND CONDITION

D1 Constructional Summary

The original part of the building was constructed using traditional methods and materials of the time. The outside walls are made of solid stone, with dressed limestone blocks ("Ashlar") on the front elevation, and rubble stone to the side and rear. The roof is a pitched timber framed structure, covered with natural slates. The windows have been replaced and are mostly painted timber. The ground floor is made of concrete and the upper floors are timber.

The rear extension is made of concrete block cavity walls. It has a flat roof, covered with mineral felt. The ground floor is concrete and the upper floor is timber.

The single storey side extension has reconstituted stone block faced cavity walls. It has a sloping roof covered with plain concrete tiles. The floor is concrete.

D2 Chimney Stacks

There is one chimney stack, located over the right side of the original part of the building. It has a dressed stone block base and the upper part, which is unlikely to be original, is made of bricks. There are no flue pots and a metal grating has been fixed over the top of the chimney stack, to prevent birds and debris from entering the flues.



Rear view of chimney stack

There are no serious problems with the chimney stack. There is some slight weathering to the stone blocks, but no repairs are needed at the present time. There are lead flashings (water proof strips) fixed around the base of the chimney stack – these form a watertight seal between the masonry and the adjacent roof coverings. There is evidence of repair to the front left side of the flashings, but no signs of any ongoing problems.

The chimney stack is located over the party wall and is known as a "party stack". This

means that your neighbour will have a number of legal rights over it and, before undertaking any repairs or alterations, you would need to consult with the neighbour. Your legal adviser can explain more about the implications of this.

There is no evidence of any flue liner or flue terminal within the chimney – a gas fire is currently installed in the main fireplace – and, if you intend to use the fireplace for an open fire or solid fuel stove, then one will need to be provided. Please refer to section D14 for more comment on this.

D3 Roofs

The main roof is pitched and covered with slates. These have been laid over a sarking felt lining (although that is only visible from within the small eaves cupboard at the front of the attic bedroom). This suggests that the roof coverings have been replaced, although I suspect this was many years ago.



The front roof slope

Although there are no serious problems with the slates, the roof does undulate slightly (known as “dishing”). This is because of distortion of the supporting structure. It is not a serious problem and there are no signs of water penetration or other problems needing immediate repair. Because of the age of the coverings, you should expect to have to carry out occasional repairs, for example to replace slates that may slip after heavy storms, until such time as the coverings are replaced.

It is difficult to precisely predict the life expectancy of a slate roof, but usually a period of 60 to 80 years is considered the norm. As the coverings age, the frequency of repairs will increase. You should consider replacing the roof coverings within the next 5 to 10 years as this will not only remove the need for regular repairs, but also improve the appearance of the property and allow for improvements to insulation.

Because the attic bedroom ceilings are formed directly against the undersides of the roof, there is a restricted view of the roof structure. It comprises a relatively lightweight

timber structure with horizontal timber purlins supporting sloping rafters which span from the ridge to the top of the front and rear walls. There are no obvious problems with the roof structure but, as noted above, there has been some distortion. It is common for roof timbers to deflect over time and this does not necessarily affect the structural integrity of the roof structure. You may find, when you do have the roof coverings replaced, that it will be necessary to replace some of the rafters, as these may have become damaged by water penetration or, possibly, wood boring insects. The condition of the rafters can only be confirmed once the coverings are removed.



Partially exposed roof structure in attic

The extension roof is flat and covered with mineralised felt. The coverings could not be seen because of the height of the building. Whilst there are no signs of water penetration internally, this may occur in due course. It is impossible to accurately predict the life expectancy of a felt roof covering although generally a life span of 10 to 12 years is expected. You should therefore obtain quotations soon for recovering this roof. When this is done, you should ensure that the supporting timber structure is checked carefully and, if appropriate, additional insulation and ventilation incorporated.

The sloping roof over the side extension is covered with concrete tiles. There are no signs of any problems with these.



Side extension

Where this roof adjoins the main wall of the building, lead flashings have been fitted and these appear effective.

I could not see the sloping roof structure as there is no access hatch inside.

D4 Rainwater Fittings

The property has plastic gutters and rainwater pipes. There are no problems with the gutters but some of the rainwater pipes are poorly secured, for example on the rear corner of the extension, and repairs are needed as soon as possible.

You should ensure that the gutters are cleared through every year, to remove accumulated leaves and other debris, as blockages can lead to a serious damp problem in the building.

Two of the rainwater pipes are connected to plastic rainwater butts. The front butt is a proprietary model, but the rear as a re-used plastic drum with no cover. You should regard this as a temporary arrangement. Both have overflows fitted, to allow excess water to run back into the rainwater pipes.



Temporary rainwater butt

Please refer to section E4 for comment on the rainwater drainage.

D5 Outside Walls

The original walls are made of stone. The front elevation has dressed limestone blocks (known as "Ashlar") and the side and rear are of traditional "rubble" construction, with roughly dressed stone blocks of various sizes. These walls range in thickness from 300mm to 400mm.

There are no signs of any serious structural problems with the original walls. There is some weathering to the front elevation, both to the faces of some of the stone blocks and the mortar pointing, but this is not severe enough to warrant repair at the present time. However, you will need to have some of the joints towards ground level repaired within the next few years.

The original mortar pointing between the stone blocks on the left and rear elevations has been replaced at various times, but there is a very small area on the rear which does need some further minor repair. The position of this weathered mortar joint appears to correspond with the area of bulging plaster on the inside rear wall of the rear first floor bedroom (please see my further comments in section D11).



Weathered joint on rear wall

The original window openings have dressed stone lintels and surrounds. There are two modern openings on the left elevation. These have concrete lintels and reconstituted stone block surrounds. There are no problems resulting from these additions.



Left elevation

The rear two storey extension walls are made of two leaves of concrete block with an air gap between the two (known as a cavity wall). They are 275mm thick. There are no signs of any problems with these walls.

The single storey extension walls are also made of cavity masonry, with an outer leaf of reconstituted stone blocks. These are 280mm thick. There are no signs of any problems with these walls either.