

Mr Keith Anderson



29 April 2024
Our ref.: 24/500

Dear Mr Anderson

Re: Chimney Inspection – Flat 3, Old Dairy Court, Wargrave

Further to my site visit to Flat 3, Old Dairy Court on Monday 22 April to inspect the stability of the rear right chimney, I am writing to you to summarise my findings. Where appropriate I have included photographs within the body of this report.

The chimney is located near to the rear right corner of the building and is built into the right hand external wall. Externally the flue does not protrude from the face of the wall, which runs along the boundary with the neighbouring property 79 High Street. The chimney is formed in brickwork with two terracotta pots to the top bedded into a mortar haunching. A lead flashing externally weathers the junction between the base of the chimney and the adjacent tiled roof.

At the time of inspection refurbishment works were being undertaken to the roof containing the chimney. The roof tiles had been recently replaced although the lead flashing was lifted and had not yet been reinstated; likely delayed whilst a decision is made on how to deal with the chimney in question.



Photograph 01 – Existing lead flashing around base of the chimney



Externally the chimney is in poor condition. The pointing is worn and missing in sections and there are areas of loose and spawled brickwork, notably around the head. The chimney also has a pronounced lean from front to back which is likely due to uneven weathering and the deterioration of the mortar joints. This leaning in itself is not uncommon in chimneys, however eventually it leans to such a degree where it is considered unsafe. The lean on this chimney is pronounced enough that it now needs safeguarding works.



Photograph 02 – Poor / missing pointing and loose brickwork to the head of the chimney



Photograph 03 – Pronounced lean from front to back

Notwithstanding the above, more concerning is the lack of restraint to the chimney which is allowing considerable lateral movement. The chimney can be rocked / moved by hand with little pressure.

Internally within Flat 3 I was able to access the chimney in both the habitable areas and roof void. There have been historic alteration works to the chimney as the chimney breast has been removed within the habitable areas, which was likely done to create more usable space within the property.

Running across the bathroom and landing ceilings on the first floor is a finished boxing which sits directly below the chimney location. Whilst I could not see what is contained within the boxing it is almost certainly some form of structural member which is supporting the chimney above (inserted when the chimney breast below was removed). This is evidenced by the boxing spanning between the rear external wall and the internal spine wall adjoining the stairs, which are both load bearing walls. Within the roof void I was able to view the chimney

extending down through the first floor ceiling into the boxing location, however again due to the lath and plaster ceiling finish I was unable to see the nature of the structural support concealed within. There was no evidence to suggest that the structural support within the boxing has moved or is inadequate for its purpose.



Photographs 04 & 05 – Structural support for chimney likely concealed with ceiling boxing in both the first floor bathroom and landing



Photograph 06 – Chimney extended down into boxing location from roof void

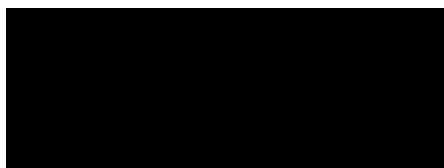
In summary I could not see any evidence internally that the chimney is supported inadequately following the removal of the chimney breast below, however the remaining section of chimney above the roof line has lacked maintenance and thus the brickwork and pointing has deteriorated. This has no doubt exacerbated the front to back lean which will have been caused by differential weathering. The lean in itself coupled with the worn pointing raises concerns regarding stability of the chimney, however it is the lack of any lateral restraint and ease of movement which is of greater concern. This is likely due to the chimney being largely above the roof line with only the lower courses being restrained by the adjacent rafters, effectively making it top heavy.

The chimney needs to be repaired and safeguarded or removed as in its current state it is unstable. This is of particular concern considering its location immediately adjacent to the grounds of 79 High Street which are in constant use.

Given that the chimney is no longer in use and cannot be put back into use (as the chimney breast has been removed) I would recommend that it is taken down entirely and the tiled roof surface reinstated over. This would be a more cost effective approach given that to retain the chimney it would need to be taken down, rebuilt and restrained with a tie bar. Removing the chimney would also remove one of the penetrations through the roof which could be a weak point for damp ingress in the future.

As the property is located within the Wargrave Conservation Area there may be planning implications for removal of the chimney, and you should take professional advice regarding this matter. Notwithstanding, the priority should be to remove or safeguard the chimney as soon as possible due to its instability.

Yours sincerely



Mr Corin Rea MSc MRICS
Andrews Eades Chartered Surveyors