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12<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Our ref:

Your ref:

Mr Tom Silver,  
Ebuild Ltd  
1 Purley Place  
London N1 1QA

Dear Mr Silver

**Flat 1, 6 Heath Drive, Hampstead NW3**

Further to your recent instructions I have now carried out a walk-over inspection at the above property and would like to confirm my comments as follows:

1. The property is the right hand of a pair of large semi-detached houses which has been converted in to 3No. self contained flats. Flat No.1 is located at ground floor level.

The house is of traditional construction with solid perimeter masonry walls beneath a hip ended pitched timber framed roof clad with plain clay tiles.

To the front right hand corner of the property was a full height 'tower', with a pitched tiled roof over.

From examination of the Geological Survey map of the area, the property was seen to be founded on the predominant London Clay.

This type of clay sub-strata is highly plastic and is very susceptible to volumetric change resulting from variations in moisture content. Such variations are often the result of severe climatic conditions such as droughts, and/or the water demand from nearby vegetation.

In this instance there was a 14.0m high Plane tree growing in the pavement line some 9.0m from the front of the property, a three trunked 12.0m high Acacia growing some 5.0m from the front right hand corner of the property and a two trunked 12.0m high Sycamore growing some 15.0m from the side of the property.

From previous correspondence I note that the property has suffered previous subsidence due to the moisture demand from the surrounding trees.

There had been a 6.0m high Holly tree growing some 1.5m from the side of the front 'tower' that had been removed as part of the subsidence insurance claim.

As part of the previous claim in 2007/2008 the front corner of the property had been underpinned together with an internal wall towards the rear.

The Schedule of Works for the claim as prepared by Ellipta in January 2007 states that the Contractor must make a Building Control application for the proposed underpinning works. I understand that full Building Control approval was obtained for the underpinning works, a copy of which should be obtained from Building Control.

2. The documentation I have received in respect of the subsidence claim gives slightly different recommendations in terms of the trees to be removed to prevent the movement from continuing.

The report as prepared by Beechcroft Sons and Nicholson in October 2004 states that the Holly tree, the Ash (Acacia), the Sycamore and the Plane tree should all be removed. However, the report as prepared by Ellipta on behalf of Royal & Sun Alliance in December 2005 states that just the Holly tree should be removed.

In any event only the Holly tree was actually removed. I do not know when the Holly tree was removed but the monitoring report dated February 2006 shows that the front corner of the property was still suffering slight movement.

My opinion is that the large Acacia should also have been removed as it is so close to the property and that only partial underpinning was being proposed rather than full underpinning of both the front and side elevations.

The movement of the rear internal wall was associated with leaking drains rather than subsidence due to the trees. The drains were repaired and the movement was reported as having ceased.

3. Externally there were numerous crack repairs and re-pointing works around the ground floor windows to both the 'tower' and to the side elevation. These cracks were seen to not have re-formed.

The slightly unusual thing is that there was significant cracking and movement observed adjacent to the first floor windows to the 'tower' and to the side elevation which are likely to have been caused by the previous subsidence but which have not been repaired as part of the claim.

There was also cracking to the side elevation in the painted render finish at first floor level which appears to have been covered in the Schedule of Works but which has not actually been repaired.

There was also a somewhat historical diagonal crack running up from the top right hand corner of the left hand ground floor window to the front elevation that had not been repaired.

Internally it did not appear as if the works as listed in the Schedule had been carried out. There were still somewhat historical cracking in the front lounge, and especially around the 'tower', in the hallway, in the middle reception room behind the lounge, and in the front or rear bedrooms. These rooms certainly did not appear to have been fully redecorated in 2007, which was as specified in the Schedule of Works.

In conclusion I would like to state that it is difficult to confirm if the tree control and underpinning works have been successful and the movement has stopped because there is still a significant amount of cracking present, both externally above first floor level and internally throughout the flat.

The Holly tree has been removed, which will have improved the situation and the external repairs to the previous cracks at ground floor have not opened up again.

Contained within the documentation were a number of monitoring results, albeit these results were taken at a time when the movement were continuing. I would now recommend that you obtain a copy of all of the result sheets, the last few sets of which do hopefully indicate that the movement had indeed stopped.

To prevent any movement from occurring in the future I would also recommend that the large Acacia tree is removed from adjacent to the front corner of the property.

The large Plane trees growing in the pavement line are presently being well cut back by the Council and so they should not be a problem. However, you should make sure that the Council continues to trim back these trees on a two year cycle.

It is possible that the present Owners took a cash settlement in lieu of the internal repair works being carried out, in which case it is likely that the other two flats did the same thing and that the repair works as detailed in the Schedule have also not been carried out to their flats.

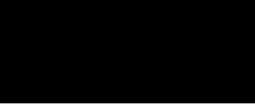
However, this does not really explain why the external cracks and damage above first floor level have not been repaired.

This is especially curious as the Insurance Company's Project Manager Mr Duke of Ellipta has actually issued a Completion Certificate stating that all of the works listed on the Schedule have been carried out to their satisfaction when blatantly they have not.

I would like to stress that this was a walk-over inspection only and no checks were carried out for wet or dry rot, timber infestation or rising damp. I did not inspect woodwork or any other part of the property that was covered, inaccessible or unexposed and cannot, therefore, confirm that such part is free from defect.

I trust that this adequately clarifies the situation but if you would like to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours sincerely,  
CLIVE ADAMS ASSOCIATES LTD



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