



Title: Oaklands North

Job No: 22515

Date: 27 November 2025

Client: Mrs Fiona Boardman

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1.0 Introduction and Brief

We were instructed by Mrs Fiona Broadman to visit and inspect the lounge room at Oaklands North. The client is proposing a planning application to remove the existing lounge structure and construct a new two-storey extension that is sympathetic to the original house exterior and consistent with the property's historic character.

The purpose of our visit was to carry out a visual structural inspection of the existing lounge structure and assess its condition in relation to the proposed works.

2.0 Description

Oaklands North is a semi-detached residential property believed to date back to the 1700s. The lounge area is understood—though not definitively recorded—to have been used historically as a school room.

The property is not listed, although is in a Conservation Area. The lounge area is single storey to the side of the main two storey portion of the house, with a window overlooking the main road and a side door.

The walls are of exposed brick externally with a pitched tiled roof.

The homeowners provided a Structural Survey prepared by Crowther & Co. (Chartered Building Surveyors) when the property was purchased in 1993.

3.0 Observations

Geological mapping indicates the property is founded on Upper Grinstead Clay. The external elevations include ventilation bricks, suggesting the presence of suspended timber floors to the ground floor.

Extract from 1993 Structural Survey

The earlier report describes significant movement affecting the lounge structure, stating:

“Dramatic movement in the living room wing which has rotated away from the original cottage to a marked degree, and the northern flank wall of this section has dropped considerably and has bowed outwards near its head as a result of roof spreading. This movement has had the effect of causing fractures in the arches over the door on the north elevation and also over the front window facing the High Street.”

Findings During Our Inspection

- Front window facing the High Street: There is clear evidence of historic external cracking and subsequent repair work, visible both above and below the window opening. The cracking is predominantly vertical and stepped in nature, with widths estimated to be approximately 1–3 mm, occurring along the existing mortar bed.
- Area above the front window: Externally, stepped diagonal cracking is visible, with sections of open mortar present. These cracks generally measure 1–2 mm in width and follow the existing mortar bed. In addition, the window exhibits a noticeable drop on the left-hand side exceeding 25 mm, which appears to be historic in nature (refer to Photos 1, 2 & 3).
- Brickwork surrounding the front window: Areas of efflorescence and moisture-related watermarking are evident across sections of the exposed brick surface, presenting as light white salt deposits and darker staining to the brick faces. This indicates historic and/or ongoing moisture migration within the masonry, likely associated with rainwater penetration via the cracked mortar joints and defective pointing previously noted (refer to Photos 1, 2 & 3).
- Lintel/arch over the side door: Exhibits a noticeable drop of approximately 20–25 mm, with associated minor vertical cracking at the edges of the opening (Photo 6).
- A stepped crack was observed on the rear elevation, following the mortar joints between the eaves level and the chimney junction. The exact width is difficult to determine due to its location. The crack continues across the chimney's rendered weathering/protection, indicating movement affecting both the wall and chimney structure. The crack profile suggests either progressive or historic differential movement within the rear wall construction (Photo 4).
- Internal visual inspection was limited due to wall surfaces being covered by decorative paper, which can mask cracking and associated movement. It was not possible to confirm whether external cracks corresponded internally.
- Damp staining was visible in several locations within the lounge (Photos 8,9,10):
 - Partition wall: extensive staining and moisture marks noted. Given their position, these may be consistent with possible roof water ingress, but this cannot be confirmed from visual inspection alone.
 - Rear chimney breast and adjacent wall surfaces: moisture staining noted.
 - Lower rear wall: damp patches noted near floor level.
- The cause(s) of dampness remain uncertain. Multiple sources may be contributing, including roof covering defects, failed flashings—particularly at the valley gutter where the lounge roof abuts the first-floor wall—high external ground levels, lack of a damp-proof course, leaking drains, or defects within

the wall construction. Further investigation would be required to determine the exact moisture pathway, although it is likely that several mechanisms are involved.

- The ceiling shows a continuous horizontal opening along the wallpaper joint. It is unclear whether this represents delamination caused by structural movement or simply wallpaper separation associated with possible dampness. No definitive downward deflection of the ceiling lining was observed. There was no access to the roof void above, so the condition of the structure above the ceiling could not be confirmed.
- Floorboards appear aged and locally uneven.

4.0 Conclusions

The lounge structure displays signs of long-standing structural deformation combined with areas of significant damp, whose sources could not be fully identified during visual inspection. The coexistence of wall movement, cracking, and moisture penetration suggests a combination of age-related deterioration and potential defects within the external envelope and roof coverings.

The dampness observed internally appears to originate from multiple possible sources, likely both through the roof covering as well as ground penetration.

Findings include:

- Possible roof-related ingress contributing to dampness on the partition wall.
- Dampness around the chimney breast and rear wall, with no single identifiable cause.
- Lower-wall moisture that may indicate rising damp, defective ground drainage, or moisture retention characteristic of older solid-wall construction.
- High moisture can result in decay of timber elements, such as the floor and roof, as well as of the masonry walls themselves. It is critical that the damp issues be addressed to protect the stability of the structure if the lounge is to be retained.

4.1 Recommendations

Given the combination of long-standing structural movement, deformation, cracking, age-related deterioration, and dampness from undetermined sources, the existing lounge structure presents significant challenges in terms of stabilisation and repair. Even without consideration of cost, retaining the existing lounge would require extensive and complex investigations and remedial works to achieve a structurally reliable outcome.

If the lounge is to be retained, our specialist structural assessment indicates that the following works would likely be required:

- Investigation of the roof structure to determine any contribution to ceiling or wall distortion.
- Assessment and rebuilding or supporting of dropped lintels, potentially involving bespoke lintel or arch-forming solutions.
- Opening-up works to identify the cause and extent of dampness and implement appropriate remedial measures.
- Ground investigation, including a site investigation report to establish desiccation depth and trial pits to confirm adjacent foundation depths.
- Consideration of underpinning options, potentially including deep underpinning or mini-piling, depending on ground investigation results.
- Rebuilding or strengthening of dropped or distorted wall sections as required.

While technically possible to retain the lounge, the combination of these issues makes repair and stabilisation a highly complex undertaking with significant long-term risk.

Additional recommendations if the lounge is demolished and replaced:

- Undertake water ingress investigations, particularly a drain survey including CCTV, to ensure all drains are functioning or repaired, and address any roof or drainage defects as part of enabling works.
- Monitor adjacent retained structures for moisture and movement during demolition.
- Implement appropriate protection for the historic sections of the house during and after demolition.

5.0 Standard Conditions

This report is the property of and is confidential to the client designated in the report. Whilst it may be shown to the client's professional advisors, the contents are not to be disclosed to, or made use of, by any third party, without our express written consent. Without such consent, we can accept no responsibility to any third party.

Whilst every effort will be made to fully inspect those parts of the building requested of us to inspect, no permanent or secured fixtures and fittings will have been removed. We will not have inspected woodwork or other parts of the structure which were covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we are unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defect.

Hockley and Dawson certify that they have carried out the works contained herein with due care and diligence to their best belief and knowledge based on the time and information available.

This report is made on behalf of Hockley and Dawson. By receiving it and acting on it, the client – or any third party relying on it – accepts that no individual is personally liable in contract, tort or breach of statutory duty (including negligence).

6.0 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A – Location Plan



6.2 Appendix B – Photos



1. External Elevation



2. Front Elevation



3. Front Elevation top window detail



4. Rear Elevation crack detail



5. Rear Elevation General view



6. Side door lintel drop detail



7. Chimney support



8. External wall



9. Chimney - rear



10. Internal partition

Paper surface damp- hand touch



11. Floorboards



12. Ceiling cover delamination