Our Ref: ENQ/MJ/AS/MAN/01224

raising standards in property preservation

Peter Cox Ltd
The Bungalow
Gorse St
Chadderton
Oldham
OL9 9QH

t 0161 219 7770
f 0161 219 7776
w www.petercox.com
e ma-contracts@petercox.com

Ms Natasha Snowling
Millbridge Project Management Ltd
22 City Road
London
EC1Y 2AJ

18th December 2024

Dear Ms Snowling

Property – Mansfields Chambers, 17 St Anns Square, Manchester M2 7PW.

Further to your email dated the 4th of December instant, please find below our response to the queries raised.

We acknowledge the concerns raised regarding the source of water ingress within the basement of the above property.

Based on the numerous internal inspections undertaken damp patches, efflorescence, Mold growths and water ingress have been observed.

Whilst it has been suggested that external excavation could be implemented, it would prove disruptive to the streets above and be costly, furthermore external excavation alone will not eliminate the need for internal Type C waterproofing.

During our latest site visit on the 16th of December following a period of dry weather, although no standing water was observed, dampness was noted to the retained walls and adjoining slabs which is typical for earth retaining structures as seen below.



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As previously stated, there is a partial existing Type C waterproofing system in place consisting of removed in the main part wall membrane, floor membrane (sitting below the screed), drainage channels and a disused sump pump chamber which would suggest historic damp issues withing the basement.

Given the above has now been removed in the most part we need to determine the extent to which the remaining dampness is dealt with, much of which has been discussed in earlier correspondence, but in essence given Listed Building and client constraints a limited Type C system has been proposed.

Based on the patterns of dampness indicating where water is entering as noted during the latest visit combined with standing water noted during previous visits during periods of inclement weather, it can be deduced that the cause of the ingress is a combination of hydrostatic pressure and lateral moisture due to the nature of a retained structure.

Notwithstanding the above and as already recommended, it is prudent that the client undertakes an external inspection to the above ground fabric of the building and rectifies any external weak points with regards pointing, gutters and so on, we also recommend remedial works are implemented to the external drainage as highlighted in North West Drain Services inspection report dated 03.04/24.

Furthermore, it would appear that given the gazed front elevation at ground floor level would appear to be stepped back in relation to the basement footprint, the outermost section of the front elevation at basement level may have an externally exposed soffit which may be contributing to the dampness at high level along the front elevation. As discussed on site, an initial isolated section of pavement will need to be carefully excavated to allow for a further inspection by Peter Cox Ltd to be made and where required further recommendations will be made if deemed necessary, however please note that this inspection and any additional works recommended would not negate the requirement for the Type C waterproofing works already proposed.

It has also been suggested that an external waterproofing system could be installed to the retained walls, this would prove disruptive to the streets above, be costly and not be non-guaranteed for a number of reasons:

1. Redundancy and Long-Term Protection
External waterproofing systems, even when perfectly installed, are not repairable given lack of access, can deteriorate over time due to soil movement, hydrostatic pressure, or damage from roots and construction activities. Internal Type C systems act as a backup to manage any water that penetrates through.

2. Ongoing Groundwater Pressure
Groundwater levels fluctuate due to seasonal changes, nearby construction, or other factors. Even with external excavation and waterproofing, groundwater can still find pathways to the basement walls and floor due to lack of continuity. Internal Type C systems can be specifically designed to manage and safely redirect any water ingress caused by hydrostatic pressure.

3. Cracks and Imperfections in the External Waterproofing
External waterproofing membranes or coatings applied during excavation are subject to:
Installation errors, Damage during backfilling, Gradual degradation over time. Type C systems mitigate the risks associated with such imperfections by capturing and channelling any water that breaches the structure.

4. Ease of Maintenance and Accessibility
Internal Type C waterproofing systems (e.g., cavity drainage membranes) are much easier to inspect, maintain, and repair compared to external systems, which would require re-excavation for any maintenance.

5. Management of Vapour and Condensation
Even with external waterproofing, moisture or water vapor can still penetrate the structure. Type C systems not only manage liquid water but also help prevent issues related to dampness or condensation by providing controlled drainage.

6. Localized Water Sources
Not all water ingress comes from external groundwater. Internal sources, such as leaks from above or service penetrations, might bypass external waterproofing entirely. Type C systems handle such water ingress effectively.

Conclusion
While external excavation and waterproofing can reduce water ingress risks, they do not guarantee absolute protection against all potential sources of moisture or water penetration and are therefore unable to be guaranteed, they are also classed as Type A waterproofing and in the most part are not reversible which given the listed status of the structure are likely not compatible.

The internal limited Type C waterproofing proposed provides a controlled, maintainable, and reliable method to manage damp and water ingress, ensuring the basement walls treated remain dry and fit for purpose.

By incorporating these measures, the aim is to balance the need for modern waterproofing solutions with the principles of conservation. This holistic approach not only provides the necessary protection against damp but also safeguards the integrity and significance of this Grade II listed asset.

We believe that this limited strategy will align with conservation best practices and uphold the value of the historic fabric while providing a sustainable solution to the damp issues within the building.

Should you wish to discuss this costing or our design in any greater detail or you would like clarification of the specification or works allowed for in our budget cost, please contact me through this office or on 07775 702856 any time up to 5.30pm.

Yours sincerely
For and on behalf of Peter Cox



Michael Jones CSRT, CSSW
Head Of UK Specialist Services