

Our Ref: B3294100822

10th August 2022

VIEWS (Holdings) Limited
Suite 1
Floor 1
Blenheim Court
Carrs Road
Cheadle
SK8 2JY

F.A.O. Mr. P. Sheridan

Dear Patrick

Re: 136 Withington Road, Whalley Range – Potential to Retain Existing Perimeter Walls

We write to confirm the situation regarding the existing perimeter walls to the above mentioned building and the feasibility of retaining them as part of the redevelopment proposals.

We can confirm we attended site recently to undertake an inspection of the structure at the same time trial holes were being excavated to determine the type and form of the foundations to the walls and also the characteristics of the material the foundations were built off.

Internal condition

Unfortunately, given the very poor state of the building safe access was not possible so we could not inspect the internal areas of the building.

However, we have had sight of the Holloway Jennings inspection report dated May 2020 and the Renaissance structural survey report dated March 2021. Both reports conclude the majority of the timber roof and floor structure is beyond repair with water ingress to the building being a major issue in the noted deterioration.

It is inevitable the condition of the structure will now be in a worse condition than when the above mentioned reports were produced and it is likely the roof and floors are offering very limited restraint to the perimeter walls and therefore the walls are probably currently structurally unstable. The Renaissance report has also noted the roof and floors are at risk of collapse and this would likely lead to a subsequent collapse of the masonry walls.

Condition of external masonry walls

The full condition of the structure to the walls is unknown due to the render finish but

Turing House

5 Archway

Manchester M15 5RL

Tel: 0161 209 8032

Fax: 0161 209 8033

email: consulting@bellmunro.co.uk

www.bellmunro.co.uk

the above mentioned reports conclude the masonry is likely to be suffering from moisture attack and potentially dry rot attack.

Some areas of brickwork are exposed where the render has fallen off. In these locations it can be observed that the bricks are in poor condition and the mortar has deteriorated due to water ingress.

We have not tested the mortar but given the age and condition of the building we anticipate the mortar will now have very low adhesion qualities resulting in the masonry having very low strength in relation to lateral loadings.

In order to make the masonry walls structurally sound, it is likely the mortar would have to be removed in most areas and new mortar installed. This would involve taking down sections of brickwork and rebuilding them.

The Holloway Jennings structural report from May 2020 identified a number of structural cracks in the façade with causes likely to be thermal movement and subsidence. Given the relatively short runs of masonry and use of lime mortar in older masonry buildings we are of the opinion that the cracks in the masonry are more likely to be from subsidence than thermal movement. The recent trial pits have identified no foundations under the walls and poor ground conditions, which would also suggest cracking is more likely to be from subsidence.

The Renaissance report from March 2021 identifies that the roof and floor timbers are in an advanced state of decay and if they collapsed, they are likely to cause a collapse of the supporting masonry walls. Given the poor condition of the external masonry walls we would concur with the findings of the Renaissance report.

Timber lintels in brickwork

Given the age of the building we anticipate timber lintels are in place over window and door openings. A number of these lintels are likely to have deteriorated, but in any event all timber lintels would need to be replaced with concrete or steel lintels. Openings would have to be propped while old lintels are removed and new lintels are inserted.

Given the overall very poor condition of the building, we are of the opinion that attempting to prop masonry and remove lintels would likely cause sections of masonry to collapse. Given the very poor internal condition of the building and the risk of collapse identified in the Renaissance report we are of the opinion that propping works could not be safely carried out inside the building while the existing structure remains in-situ and before the walls are stabilised.

To replace lintels safely, we are of the opinion that the masonry in the areas above lintels would need to be taken down, new lintels inserted and the masonry rebuilt.

Roof support & restraint

The existing masonry, due to its poor condition is unlikely to be able to provide

adequate lateral or vertical restraint to a roof structure. The Renaissance report identifies the existing roof (due to timber decay) is at risk of collapse.

Any new roof would be built off a wall plate that is both fixed into a wall and held in place (resisting uplift) by means of straps which are fixed into the inner face of the masonry wall.

In order for the masonry walls to provide an adequate degree of lateral and vertical restraint to a new roof, it is likely the masonry walls would need to be taken down and rebuilt

Foundations

The results of the recent trial hole excavations are summarised in the Earth Environmental & Geotechnical report dated 27th July 2022 and show the walls to have no foundations and to be built directly off made ground or very loose sand. This arrangement is not structurally stable and if the walls were to be retained they would need to be underpinned down to quite a considerable depth to provide them with a suitable foundation built off competent material.

Ideally underpinning work is done while masonry above is well restrained. Given the collapse risk of the building identified in the Renaissance report we are of the opinion that underpinning could not be undertaken safely with the building in its current condition.

Deconstruction Method

In order to progress with the development of the building, the existing collapsed and damaged roof and floor structures will require taking down safely. The demolition method and sequencing involved with this process will need to be carefully planned and will need to progress from the roof downwards in order to ensure a safe method of working. It is likely the works will need to proceed by hand via operatives working from cherry pickers or similar.

If the perimeter walls in question were to be retained they would need to be stabilised prior to commencing the demolition work. This would involve the underpinning works as well as the installation of an extensive lateral restraint system. These would be dependent on the structural integrity of the walls which at the moment can not be fully determined but is currently considered to be very low. Undertaking the underpinning and installation of a lateral restraint system to a wall of suspect structural strength without access to the internal areas of the building whilst not impossible will be a high risk item in terms of health and safety. It is also likely to have a very significant cost premium and significantly increase any build programme.

There are other items to consider which could affect the retention of the walls and existing structural strength of the walls including loss of section where floor and roof timbers as well as timber lintels are built into the wall and are suffering from wet rot / dry rot attack and the presence of asbestos which might not be able to be assessed until the demolition proceeds due to the unsafe nature of the building.

Directors

Andrew H. Bell B.Eng.(Hons), C.Eng., M.I.Struct.E.

Christopher J. Munro B.Eng.(Hons), C.Eng., M.I.Struct.E.



MANCHESTER
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
Registered in England 4951973

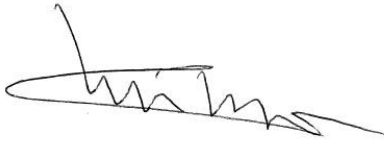
Conclusion

Given the range of issues with retaining the perimeter walls and the collapse risk of the building identified in the Renaissance report we would recommend the walls are accurately surveyed externally (if not already done) and are re-built off new suitable foundations and then rendered to match the existing walls.

If you have any queries on this, please do not hesitate to contact.

Kind Regards

Yours Sincerely



Chris Munro
For and on behalf of Bell Munro Consulting Limited

Directors

Andrew H. Bell B.Eng.(Hons), C.Eng., M.I.Struct.E.

Christopher J. Munro B.Eng.(Hons), C.Eng., M.I.Struct.E.



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