WHITE CHAPEL
THE ART OF FINE PLASTER

Date: 04.03.26

John Turner Construction
Site - William Kay House

Abstract

To carry out an initial survey at William Kay House; of existing solid plaster and make an assessment of how best to reinstate missing areas of plaster work where necessary and make good areas where plaster is to be removed to introduce services behind wall finishes.

Client
John Turner

Date
4th March 2026

Client instruction
Inspect existing solid plaster work and report on its condition, methodology for replacement where wall, partition, or ceiling plaster is missing and also include a sequence of work for removal and reinstatement of existing solid / solid lath and plaster is affected so services can be introduced behind plastered finishes.

Ceiling plaster finishes
The ceilings appear to be mainly lath and plaster with a haired scratch coat, float coat and setting coat. There is some cracking to the ceilings so where this is the case a hammer test should be carried out by an experienced surveyor to check that that the scratch coat is still satisfactorily bonded to the lath substrate.

Wall plaster finishes
The original wall plaster is a solid lime plaster made up of a haired scratch coat, float coat and setting coat. There are also some localised repairs which have been carried out more recently using moder pre-mix plasters, some of which may not be as compatible with the building and its substrates as traditional solid lime plaster systems.

Ornamental Plaster finishes
There are a number of ornamental finishes in the building most notably plaster cornice in the ceiling to wall intersections of some rooms. These are made up of plain members in some areas and enriched ornaments in other areas, some of which are missing.

Solid plaster with Lath and plaster
There are partitions adjacent to some wall areas where the lath and plaster has been removed. This allowed us in some areas' where the other side of the partition had not been disturbed, an inspection of the bonding mushrooming effect of the original lime plaster scratch coat pushed through the gaps between the lath which is the key to this first coat staying securely in place. An assessment should be made to note whether the laths are sawn of riven.
The wall plaster is quite thick in some areas which will mean that re-plastering in these areas will require multiple scratch coat, before the float coats can be applied and ruled in plumb and in line.

Re-plastering

Where original plaster is missing an assessment should be made of adjacent plaster to identify the sand aggregate and lime biding matrix (hydraulic or lime putty) and the ratio's which the sand and limes have been mixed in for scratch coats, float coats, setting coats and quantity of hair introduced to the scratch coat to reduce cracking during curing. Providing that these mixes are compatible with the exposed substrates; these can be suitably damped down and the application of scratch coats can commence. It should be noted that where traditional lime putty plasters are used there will be a time consideration between the application of subsequent coats to facilitate suitable curing so base coats that have been applied and deeply scratched are ready to receive the next coat.

Plaster removal and reinstatement

Where services such as electrical wires, pipes or conduits need to be let into a wall, a localised hammer test should be carried out. The areas to be chased carefully marked and cut out so as not to loosen or damage adjacent existing wall plaster and then the sequence of works noted above carried out to make these areas good. It may be necessary to use a very fine sand and rich lime putty in areas of making good to avoid ridging where new plaster meets existing plaster.

Conclusions

Survey areas to be plastered as described above and if found necessary carry out hammer tests to confirm the bond between lime plaster and substrates. If areas of ceiling plaster are live, where cracking has been observed, which is to say the bond has failed then consideration should be given to stabilization to prevent loose plaster falling away from substrates.
There is also localised damage to, and missing enrichments on ornamental plaster finishes which can be matched and replaced if required.

Recommendations

Provide rates and times for a systematic scheme of replacing missing plaster or removing existing plaster and re-plastering with compatible mixes as close to the original mixes as is reasonably practicable as noted above.
Carry out remediation or not, to ornamental plaster finishes as required.

We hope the above is of interest, please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further assistance.

Yours faithfully

John Bradshaw - MCIOB
Director
For and on behalf of Whitechapel Art Plaster Co Ltd

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