



Your ref: LRW/AL/30171

28th February 1983

L. R. Wilson, Esq.,  
Messrs. Summers & Co.,  
27, London End,  
BEACONSFIELD,  
Bucks. HP9 2HN.

Dear Sir,

re: 14, Bowden Lane, High Wycombe.

Thank you for your letter of the 14th February, and in accordance with your instructions we have inspected the above property and beg to report as follows:-

We have examined the area of defect, which concerns upper storey internal partition walls. Basically these walls are carried by the bedroom floors and as the partitions comprise 4" building block they are relatively heavy, but not dangerously so. Inevitable joist shrinkage, combined with a certain amount of deflection, has allowed the partition walls to subside, with the result that gaps of up to about half-an-inch in width have opened between the tops of the walls and the bedroom ceilings. There is associated cracking and distortion round the bedroom door openings, so that the doors will not now close. Also on the Landing the floor is noticeably out of level.

The condition has probably been made worse by the fact that there are no ground floor internal walls which are even remotely near the positions of the bedroom partitions so as to offer some support and stiffening effect, and these latter partitions stand near to mid-span, which is, of course, the weakest part of the joist. Further, the joists themselves are undersize (being adequate for a 14ft span but not 15ft), although to increase the joist depth by one inch would not have prevented the defects occurring.

Now that all joist shrinkage has been accomplished there should be no further subsidence or other movement in the partitions. Although the actual strength of the floors is not in doubt as regards physical breaking point, there may be further gradual weakening with age, and we would not like to predict the condition in ten years time.

Two remedial methods are therefore available :-

(i) Fill the cracks with Polyfilla, re-fit the door linings to restore a square condition, and re-decorate. This is a reasonable course and would be inexpensive, but there is a risk that cracks would re-open because walking on the bedroom floors creates vibration. With this method the long term condition may be open to some doubt.

(ii) Insert steel joists at ground floor ceiling level beneath the two main bedroom partitions and encase the joists in plasterboard. Carry out crack filling and squaring of bedroom door openings as before, and re-decorate. This method would be permanent, but may cost of the order of £1,500, subject to obtaining an exact quotation.

Perhaps you would let us know in due course how you would like to proceed. We should point out that in any reference of the matter to the N.H.B.C. under the guarantee scheme, the consequences of timber shrinkage are excluded. We think that a claim could be pursued, however, on the basis of the undersized joists, although this can be a protracted course.

Yours faithfully,

John Millbourn & Co.

*J. E. Millbourn*

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