External Staircase at 21 Villa Road, Brixton, London, SW9 7ND

For

Lambeth

Condition Report

9th July 2019

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1. Introduction

Introduction

John Rowan & Partners are an independent RICS accredited multi-disciplinary construction consultancy. Our services range from quantity surveying (cost consultancy), project management, building surveying, quality inspector / clerk of works, health and safety advice, contract and procurement advice, planning consultancy, information systems, sustainability advice to strategic asset management.

In accordance with instructions received from the London Borough of Lambeth, we have inspected the subject property making up what is known as 21 Villa Road, Brixton, London, SW9 7ND to report on the general condition of the emergency fire escape staircase to the rear.

Multiple inspections have been completed during the works currently occurring to the property.

We have prepared a photographic schedule; which is attached to this report as Appendix A. Further photographs are available on request.

2. Executive Summary

The staircase to the rear of 21 Villa Road, Brixton, London, SW9 7ND is most likely constructed from steel with a heavily deteriorated finish. The staircase is constructed in a spiral profile.

We are informed by the freeholder that the staircase is used as an emergency exit from the property at 21b Villa Road. Due to the condition of the staircase we would consider it to be unfit for this purpose.

The staircase is heavily corroded, noticeably distorted to one side, and does not meet current building regulations. As such we consider the staircase to be a dangerous structure which is beyond economical repair.

It is recommended that the staircase is replaced to facilitate the safe egress of the residents from 21b Villa Road in the event of an emergency.

It is recommended that all construction personnel are barred from accessing the staircase for the entirety of the works, until such a time as the staircase is replaced or rendered safe.

3. Descriptions

Finish and Corrosion

The finish to the staircase is heavily deteriorated and has reached end of life. The finish acts as a protective barrier against oxygen and moisture and therefore prevents the build up of corrosion. Due to the failure of the finish the structure has been able to corrode to a point of advanced deterioration (picture 1). Due to the advanced corrosion it is possible the structural integrity of the staircase has been affected. This can be seen to the lowest landing plate which has rusted through (picture 2).

Corrosion may also become a health and safety issue to those using the staircase. Where metal is corroded sharp edges can form and sections can become brittle and break away. Where the staircase is also an emergency exit it is essential that a safe and secure handhold is provided.

If left uncorrected corrosion will advance to the point that the inherent structural integrity is depleted. This would eventually lead to the spalling of rusted sections or the collapse of the staircase structure.

Structural Movement

The staircase shows evidence of structural movement. The treads show noticeable downward distortion to the outer edge as the flight turns towards the property (picture 3). This distortion may be due to multiple factors such as the expansion of corrosion, overloading due to the staircase's deteriorated loadbearing capacity or movement of the underlying loadbearing ground.

In addition, several of the vertical railing bars have buckled and/or bent (picture 4). This will have brought the railings out of line with the latest Building regulations as below, which require no more than a 100mm gap through the railing. The buckled and/or bent railing bars may be symptomatic of the above described movement. However, it is our opinion that the bars have likely been bent from mechanical action over time, where residents have moved and placed loads against them.

The structural movement is likely symptomatic of the wider deterioration of the staircase. The distorted treads also pose a trip risk to those ascending or descending the staircase. This is especially true of the use of the staircase as an emergency escape when the likelihood of a trip occurring will be substantially increased.

Compliance with Building Regulations

Current Building Regulations require that staircases have a rail at a height of between 900 and 1000mm, with a height of 1100mm to the landings. At present the staircase to the rear of 21 Villa Road does not fully comply with these regulations. The Building Regulations cannot be retrospectively applied, however, as other works are occurring to the property it would be logical and prudent to bring the property further in line with current Regulations where possible. This would ensure maximum safety of the residents at 21 Villa Road. It would also be more cost efficient to replace

the staircase whilst other works are already occurring onsite. Items such as site welfare would not have to be paid for twice by the leaseholders.

Emergency Access and Escape

We have been informed by the freeholder that the staircase is an emergency escape route for the first floor flat at 21b Villa Road. As such the freeholder has an obligation to ensure the staircase remains in a good standard of repair to ensure safe egress from the property. The current condition of the staircase is inadequate for this purpose and therefore remedial action must be taken.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

As described above the external staircase structure is heavily deteriorated throughout. Due to the structural failures to the staircase we would consider it an unsafe structure unsuitable for use as an emergency exit.

Recommendations

The staircase is heavily corroded throughout, to the point that the structural integrity of some constituent parts has failed. Due to the advanced corrosion we believe it would be uneconomical to repair the staircase.

Where structural movement necessitates replacement of parts the components can likely no longer be sourced, resulting in any replacements being custom fabricated at great expense.

Where parts are not structurally impaired the corrosion could be wire brushed, treated with an appropriate remedial product and finished in an appropriate metal paint. However, the years of life gained to these parts would be relatively few for the cost outlay required.

As such, we would recommend complete replacement of the structure with a new galvanised, stainless or similar external staircase.

Prepared by .....

[redacted]

Surveyor

5. Appendix A: Photographic Schedule

Photo 1: View of the top landing plate to the external staircase showing the general level of corrosion. Note the distortion to the plate caused by the expansion of the oxidising metal.

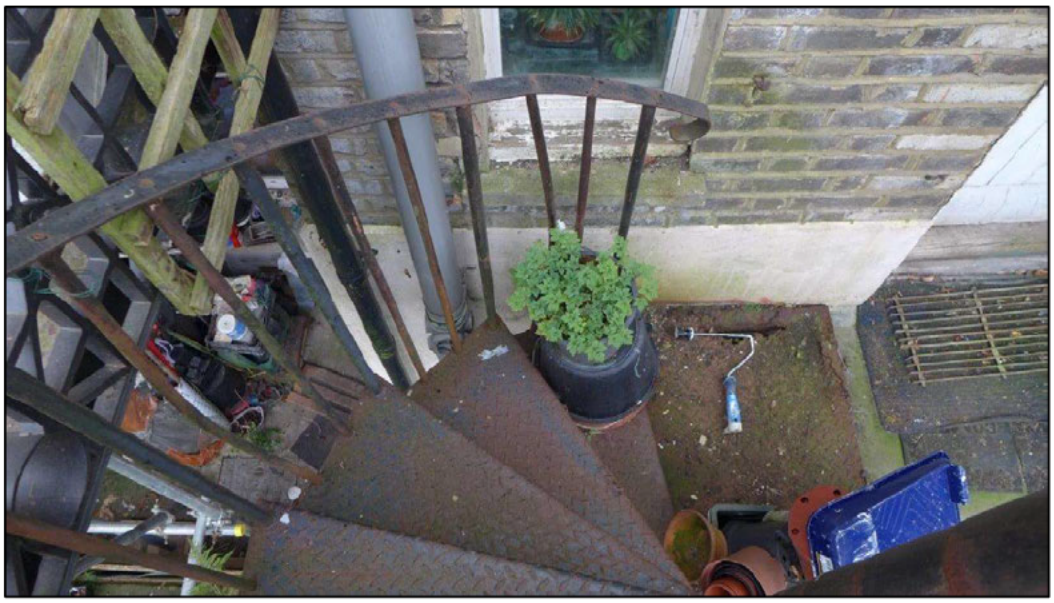

Photo 2: View of the lower treads and landing plate to the external staircase. Note the hole to the landing plate caused by a loss of structural integrity and the bent vertical railing bars.

Photo 3: View of the structurally distorted treads to the external staircase. Note the angle of the treads can be easily seen affecting the potted plant on the staircase. Note the chained strut propping up the adjacent dangerous structure.

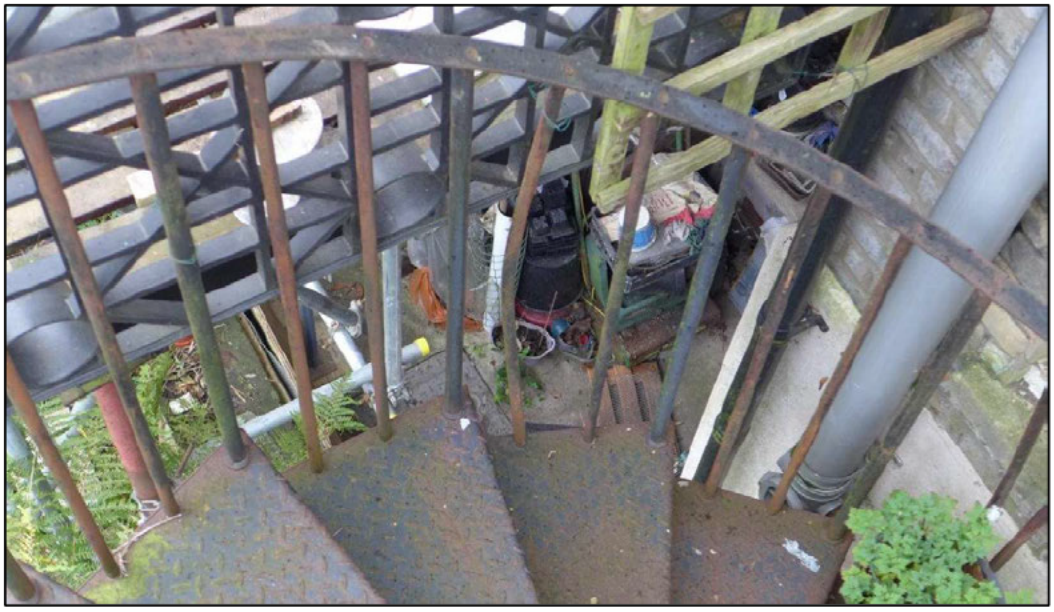

Photo 4: View of the metal tread plates and railings. Note the bent/buckled railings and the level of corrosion to the treads.