



07 October 2025

Jack Henderson
Savills, Sterling Court
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
EX1 1QA

Dear Jack,

High House Farmhouse, Corsely, BA12 7NJ

Mann Williams were appointed by Savills, on behalf of the Longleat Estate, to visit the above property, advise on its structural condition and outline remedial works as required. Ahead of our visit, we were informed that the main concern was suspected decay of basement timber beams and widespread cracking around the property. We visited site on Thursday 11th September. The day was slightly overcast with the presence of moisture in the air, following several damp days.

Access to the property was available, allowing us to complete a visual inspection of the basement area, external masonry walls and internal living spaces. It is noted that no access to the loft was available. No intrusive investigations or opening up works were carried out as part of our inspection. Our commentary herein focuses on the requested items of review (masonry cracking and condition of timber beams in the cellar).

Observations

The property is a detached, two storey masonry farmhouse appearing to have been extended with multiple sections over the years. The exact chronology of construction of the various extensions is currently unknown.

Cracks of varying width appear on the external walls. Those are primarily concentrated on the North extension/car park side entrance of the house. Vertical cracking outlines the quoins of the northeast and northwest end corners of the extension. Vertical cracking was also noted at the east interface between the extension and the main farmhouse structure. Rainwater downpipes are located either side of the north elevation of the extension in question. The west downpipe is missing with the gutter presumably discharging from high level directly to the foot of the wall. The east side downpipe was in place and surrounded by vegetation.

Inside the structure there is cracking visible at the interfaces between the North section of the property and the main farmhouse body. There is also widespread hairline cracking around the rest of the building on external walls and internal partitions. Those are mostly noted around door and window openings, or wall intersections. Areas that were reported by the tenant as “recently decorated” appear to have cracked again.

A cellar can be accessed from the kitchen space, and it is located directly underneath the piano room to the east. In the cellar, the ground floor timber structure is visible overhead. That comprises timber joists at regular centres supported by a primary timber beam, approximately at the middle of the room. The beam itself bears onto masonry walls either end, and it is spliced over a central support roughly at midspan. The beam shows signs of localised surface

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decay, however upon probing with a screwdriver where accessible, no major pockets of decay were noted. Some of the original joists have deteriorated and as a result they were repaired in the past by partnering up with modern softwood. It was noted that other wooden items (broomsticks etc) showed signs of ongoing wood boring pest infestation.

The interior wall that runs adjacent to the stairs appears to be slightly sunken with the low point being at the bottom of the stairs above the basement. The localised floor dip was more pronounced in the piano room side of the internal partition. A boxed out down stand was also noted spanning over the area in question (at first floor level). Investigating the make-up of the stud wall partition flanking the staircase or the boxed out downstand was not possible due to no access available.

Conclusions

The structure appears to be suffering from movement, resulting in formation of widespread cracking around areas of weakness such as window and door openings. The North extension appears to be moving differentially to the main body of the structure resulting in masonry cracks at the interface between the two sections. Lack of key between the extension and main farmhouse masonry walls provides a clear path for cracks to manifest themselves. The existing vegetation and rainwater discharge at the north end of the building are likely contributing factors for the cracking around the quoins. The movement and cracking around the rest of the property is most likely attributed to ground movement and potential root activity affecting the performance of the existing footings. It is assumed that different phases of construction have been founded at varying levels resulting in a range of settlement rates among sections of the farmhouse. The recent extremes of summer drought and concentrated autumnal rainfall are possibly exacerbating the situation. The soil characteristics and existing foundation details need to be verified with localised investigation to inform such assumptions.

The “sinking” of the interior wall by the stairs is likely also accredited to ground movement. It is also suspected that the boxed out downstand over the wall in question imposes load on the stud partition. The span of the boxed-out member at first floor level is such that an intermediate support would normally be required. It is assumed that despite the stud wall not being constructed as load bearing, in reality it does offer some support to the structure above. The soil characteristics in the area, the make up of the wall, and structural configuration of the downstand member would need to be confirmed to verify these assumptions.

Upon visual inspection of the basement timber members there appears to be no major reduction in their structural section. Members that had been severely affected in the past, have been effectively repaired with no major concerns arising currently.

Recommendations

Investigation of the soil characteristics and foundation details of the structure would be useful at first instance. Targeted excavation of trial pits to expose the founding depth and type of soil would inform the assessment of wall movement causes.

The missing rainwater goods should be reinstated at the north end of the building. Effectively discharging rainwater away from the building foundations should also be ensured by means of investigating the localised underground drainage connections and pipes and rectifying any leaks. To mitigate the risks of further movement, vegetation in the proximity of building foundations should be reduced and controlled in the future. An allowance should be made for installation of cintec anchors pinning the quoin stones back to the main body of the north extension.

It would be advisable that a specialist is consulted regarding the need for treating the timber structure in the cellar. Although the primary structure didn't raise any major structural concerns at this stage, the signs of active infestation

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elsewhere in the space should be considered carefully and risks of migration managed as possible.

It would be useful to open up the boxing out of the downstand member by the stairs. This would enable the structural arrangement to be understood better, and potential structural strengthening measures proposed as appropriate.

Final Remarks

Following visual inspection at High house farmhouse, no major structural concerns were raised at present. However, there are signs of ongoing movement resulting in a number of structural issues that require attention in the short term to mitigate risks of further deterioration in the future. Due to the age and nature of the building, some movement would be expected, however further investigation as suggested above, would help understand the causes better and propose targeted repairs where possible.

We trust the above provides an initial assessment of the issues brought to our attention. Should you require to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

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Senior Structural Engineer

CARE Conservation Accredited Structural Engineer

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