6 July 2023

Saddleworth Institute Condition Report

Description

The Saddleworth Institute is a stone building built in the late 1800's, it consists of two front rooms, entrance foyer, rear room and kitchen.

The hall is equipped with a raised stage with minimal facilities for shows in the way of rigging and lighting.

There is a lean to on the south west side of the hall housing toilet facilities.

The external stone work is in good condition with some re-pointing noted.

The lower section of stones are showing signs of salt damp damage and are shedding the face of the stone.

Discussion

The Saddleworth Institute has a number of general maintenance issues that will be highlighted later in this report.

Structurally, the Institute is in good condition with no discernible signs of structural issues. Halls of this vintage were constructed without the use of

concrete footings and damp proof membranes, instead the walls were probably laid on large foundation stones in trenches.

Hence the main problem with this building is moisture, not just under the walls and in the walls but under the entire floor. It was noted in the inspection that the external lower walls have been repointed and the internal walls have been re-plastered.

It is my understanding that the Council has made a concerted effort with modern chemical damp proofing methodology in the form of liquid chemical barriers to control the issues with dampness.

This system has obviously been ineffective in controlling the rising damp as seen by the condition of the new plastering which is delaminating and the underlying render deteriorating as well. See below




In my opinion the only way to permanently rectify this problem is to install a physical Damp Proof Membrane (DPM) to all stone walls. The timber floor in the main hall is showing signs of warping due to moisture ingress.

In places the floor has lifted off its bearers caused by the timber flooring swelling with no allowance for expansion. This issue with distortion of the floor can also be attributed to a lack of ventilation.

These floors would need to be removed to gain access to the internal walls to effectively install the DPM. Once the timber floors are out of the way the area underneath can be treated for rising damp.

This would be a very costly exercise but a permanent one.

The timber floors could be mechanically ventilated but this has ongoing costs associated with the equipment required and the running cost.

Maintenance Issues

Windows

The windows across the front of the institute need to be replaced. See below:

Timber Work

Some of the timber on the institute needs to be replaced as they have not been adequately maintained over the years. Other areas need to be repaired and painted (see image left).

Front Porch

The front porch is in very poor condition, gutters need to be replaced, and the frame is also in need of new timber work. The option would be to remove the porch altogether if not required.

Stage

The stage structure is not compliant to today's standards, and as a Council owned building should not be used. Significant upgrade to the structure would need to be done for it to be used safely for its intended use.

Drainage around building.
It was noted that the building has very poor drainage around the perimeter which no doubt contributes to the dampness in the walls.

Some drainage pits at down pipes are full of water, pipes probably blocked, one drain at the front doesn't appear to have a pipe connected. See Below

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this report, some immediate maintenance is required and alteration to how water is to get away from the building. The building is

generally in good condition for its age but for it to be useful for years to come the damp problem needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency with a more permanent solution.

A regular maintenance program needs to be established to alleviate further deterioration of the building.

Yours Faithfully

Don Collinge
Accredited Professional Building Level 2