



Quinquennial Inspections Ltd

Ecclesiastical • Almshouses • Heritage Buildings

Quinquennial Inspection Report

Harborne Cottages,
Coopers Lane,
Smethwick B67 7DL



20th August 2024

Project number: 1253C-04

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Property Address

Harborne Cottages, Coopers Lane, Smethwick B67 7DL.

1.2 Client's Name and Address

Harborne Parish Lands Charity, 109 Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9AA.

1.3 Buildings and structures included in the survey

Harborne Cottages comprises 16 one-bedroom cottages. No's. 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 were surveyed internally.

No's. 2, 7, 11, 13 and 16 were surveyed in 2018 and No's. 6, 9, 13 & 15 in 2012.

This means that No's 2 & 9 have been surveyed twice each and No. 13 three times.

Built in 1927 of traditional construction, the site includes gardens to the courtyard and rear.

There are two communal laundry rooms and 6 outside stores. No. 2 has been converted to a communal room, with a lounge, kitchen and toilet facilities.

In this report the individual dwellings are referred to as "cottages" and the building, as a whole, as the "property".

Where elements of the building have been identified in this report as 'left hand' or 'right hand', these areas are viewed as from the front of the building.

1.4 Date of Survey and weather conditions

The survey was carried out on 20th August 2024. Weather conditions at the time of the inspection were showers following a mixed week.

1.5 Limitations of Inspection

External inspections were from ground floor level only with the use of binoculars and with a 3m ladder.

In carrying out the Survey the following assumptions have been made:

- a: That high alumina cement, concrete or calcium chloride additive or any other problematic materials or techniques were not used when the building was constructed, or in any subsequent alterations.
- b: That future inspections of any hidden parts of the structure which have not been inspected would not reveal material defects, or cause the surveyor to alter materially any indicative costings provided.

Woodwork or other parts of the structure which are not uncovered or exposed, or were inaccessible have not been inspected. It is, therefore, not possible to report that the property is free from defect. However, conclusions about the construction have been drawn from surface evidence visible at the time of the inspection.

1.6 The Site and Surrounding Areas

British Geological Survey records indicate that the property is built on:-

Bedrock Geology

Chester Formation - Sandstone and conglomerate, interbedded. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 250 and 247.1 million years ago during the Triassic period.

Superficial Deposits

Till, Mid Pleistocene - Diamicton. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 860 and 116 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

1.7 Recommendations for Further opening up

None.

1.8 Recommendations for Further Specialist Advice

- A CCTV survey and water testing of the below ground drainage installation should be carried out (section 5.9.1).

1.9 Works undertaken since last inspection

The previous stock condition survey was done by Tim Richardson MCIAT MSAI MCIOB MRICS in April 2018. Since that time the following work has been undertaken:

- Roof repairs, including re-bedding ridges and hips.
- Glazing replacement (in progress at time of inspection)
- New kitchens and shower rooms
- Various internal repairs

1.10 Outstanding work from last inspection

- Resurfacing tarmac
- Carry out Legionella Risk Assessments.
- Provide wire balloons to the top of the soil stacks

1.11 Summary of General Structural Condition

The property is in good condition with no major items of disrepair, some minor issues need addressing and some maintenance will be needed within the quinquennium. The cottages are all 'decent' according to the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

1.12 Health & Safety Issues

- A Legionella risk assessment is required for the cottages' hot and cold water systems (section 5.6).

1.13 Description of Defects

Further details of the defects listed below are contained in the relevant sections of this report; costs for rectifying the items are included in Appendix 1.

2.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROPERTY CONDITION

In assessing the property the current statutory national housing standards have been considered; these are – The Decent Homes Standard and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Cracks are categorised in accordance with BRE (building Research Establishment) Digest 251. Whilst these standards are not mandatory for Almshouses, the Almshouse Association recommends following them as best practice.

2.1 THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD

To be defined as 'decent', a home must meet each of the following criteria:

It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, which came into effect in April 2006; this is an evidence-based inspection, which considers the effect of 29 given hazards that might exist in a property. The system enables risks in dwellings arising from health and safety hazards to be assessed and then minimised or eliminated.

It is in a reasonable state of repair

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either:

- one or more of the key building components are “old” and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- two or more of the other building components are “old” and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.

It has reasonably modern facilities and services

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those which lack three or more of the following:

- a reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less);
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- a reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less);
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC;

- adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem);
- adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.

It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

This means that the dwelling must have both effective insulation and efficient heating.

For a house heated by electricity there must be a minimum of 200mm thermal insulation in the roofspace.

2.2 THE HOUSING HEALTH AND SAFETY RATING SYSTEM

The property is inspected to ascertain whether there are any hazards. A full scoring exercise has not been carried out but hazards can be scored and categorized as serious (category 1 hazards) and other less serious (category 2 hazards). Other hazards may exist (category 3 hazards) but these are deemed to be an acceptable level of risk.

The 29 hazards that can be assessed are those associated with or arising from:

(A) Physiological Requirements

Damp and mould growth
Excess cold
Excess heat
Asbestos and Man Made Fibres (MMF)
Biocides
Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products
Lead
Radiation
Uncombusted fuel gas
Volatile Organic Compounds

(B) Protection Against Infection

Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
Food safety
Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
Water supply for domestic purpose

(C) Protection Against Accidents

Falls associated with baths
Falling on level surfaces

Falling on stairs and steps
Falling between levels
Electrical hazards
Fire
Flames, hot surfaces
Collision and entrapment
Explosions
Position and operability of amenities
Structural collapse and failing elements

(D) Psychological Requirements

Crowding and space
Entry by intruders
Lighting
Noise

3.0 Exterior

3.1	Roof Coverings		
3.1.1	Structure	Roofs are covered with clay plain tiles with mortar bedded half round ridge tiles and mortar bedded bonnet hip tiles. Valleys are tiled.	
	Condition   	Roof coverings are original and now some 97 years old. Recent work has prolonged the life of the covering but it should be reviewed every quinquennium and replacement should be budgeted for in the long term A few isolated tiles have slipped.	
	Repair needs	Replace slipped tiles. Eventually replace covering.	2 4

3.1.2	Fascias, soffits and bargeboards	Painted softwood / UPVC.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.2	Rainwater Goods		
3.2.1	Gutters and rainwater pipes	Original gutters were "deepflow" pattern in cast iron; most have been replaced with half round gutters in UPVC and circular rainwater pipes. A few isolated sections of cast iron pipes remain.	
	Condition 	There is a gap to the gutter to the front of No. 5.	
	Repair needs	Repair gap to gutter.	1
3.2.2	Gullies	Gullies are clay or concrete with metal grids.	
	Condition 	Fair, a few are slightly blocked with vegetation and leaves. See also section 5.8.1.	
	Repair needs	Clean out gulleys.	2

3.3	Walls	
3.3.1	Chimney stacks	Brick chimney stacks with cement mortar pointing.
	Condition	Good.
	Repair needs	None.
3.3.2	Walls	Facing brickwork in stretcher bond with mortar pointing.
	Condition   	Generally good. There are minor areas of isolated eroded and cracked pointing, in particular: Front of No. 9 Front of No. 5 Bay of No. 4 Door head of No. 3 Several of the arches to the walls between terraces have cracked and slipped slightly and there is some vegetation growth to the tops of the walls, in particular: Arch to No. 6/7 Although many are affected to an extent.
	Repair needs	Repoint isolated areas.
		Repoint and repair arches.

3.3.3	Damp proof course	A slate damp proof course is visible to most elevations.	
	Condition	Good, and it is a reasonable distance above the external ground level.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.3.4	Airbricks	There are terracotta airbricks present.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.4	Doors, Windows, External Joinery and Metalwork		
3.4.1	Doors	Doors are wood stable doors, the doors facing the courtyard have all been insulated and refurbished in 2012, the kitchen doors are original.	
	Condition	Fair, some doors are problematic in terms of draughts but the timber is generally of good quality and well-seasoned. Replacement in modern wood would probably not be a good long-term solution. Replacement in other materials would detract from the overall character of the buildings although the Locally Listed status does not necessarily mean that this cannot be done. See also section 4.6.1. External decorations are considered in section 3.5.	
	Repair needs	Draughtstrip doors.	3

3.4.2	Windows	Metal mostly double glazed casement windows with a stone surround, with secondary glazing internally.	
	Condition 	A number of the sealed double glazed units have failed leading to condensation between the panes. This affects a large number of the courtyard side windows. Work was in progress at the time of the survey to repair these and the remaining failed units are No's. 15, 16 and 17. UPVC windows would not really be appropriate to this development and due to the unusually narrow openings would look very poor as well.	
	Repair needs	Re-glaze affected windows.	1

3.5	External Paintwork		
3.5.1	Description	Doors, windows, fascia boards, soffits, external gates and metalwork are all painted.	
	Condition 	Fascias are largely obscured by cables and whilst most appear to be redundant some may not be. Decorations to a few doors are peeling. External woodwork and metalwork should be redecorated on a 5-7 year cycle. Decorative finishes to the bench around the monument are flaking.	
	Repair needs	Touch up decorations. Redecorate paintwork.	2 4
3.6	Paving, Paths, Steps, Ramps, Drives and Parking Areas		
3.6.1	Paths	Paths are mainly tarmac although there are some riven stone paths at the front.	
	Condition  	Tarmac paths are showing signs of wear, there are no proper edgings to most of the paths and as a result the tarmac is loose and crumbling at the edges. The situation has deteriorated slightly since the previous Quinquennial Inspection.	

	   		
	Repair needs	Re-surface tarmac paths.	3

3.6.2	Steps	Brick, stone, brick with concrete flag treads.	
	Condition 	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.6.3	Ramps	None.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not applicable.	
3.6.4	Car parking	There is a tarmac car park to the rear of the site with white lines demarcating the bays.	
	Condition 	Fair.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.6.5	Drying area	Rotary clothes dryers to the rear of the buildings.	
	Condition 	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	

3.7	Site Features: Boundary Walls, Gates, Fences, etc.		
3.7.1	Walls	The front and rear boundaries are brick walls with brick cappings.	
	Condition    	There are a few isolated areas of missing pointing to the rear wall and some graffiti.	
	Repair needs	Repoint isolated areas. Clean off graffiti.	3 2

3.7.2	Fencing and gates	There is a metal gate to the front entrance and a wood gate to the rear. Side boundaries are metal palisade fencing.	
	Condition   	Fences and gates are generally in good condition although there is some rot to the bottom of the rear gate. External decorations are considered in section 3.5.	
	Repair needs	Repair rot to gate.	2
3.7.3	Benches and street furniture	Various wood items.	
	Condition 	Good. External decorations are considered in section 3.5.	
	Repair needs	None.	

3.8	Soft Landscaping		
3.8.1	Description	There are lawns with hedges, shrub planting, flowers and trees.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.9	Trees that may have an influence on the building		
3.9.1	Description	There are many large, mature trees on the south and west sides of the site; some of the latter in the park are in the ownership of the Council, including a very tall Ash tree.	
	Condition   	Many are closer than the "safe" distance to cause any damage but there are no obvious signs of damage at the present time. Some tree work will be needed. Whilst there is no current evidence of any structural problems caused by tree roots they do overhang some of the roofs, leaves will be problematic to clear and falling branches are a potential hazard and could cause damage to the roofs.	

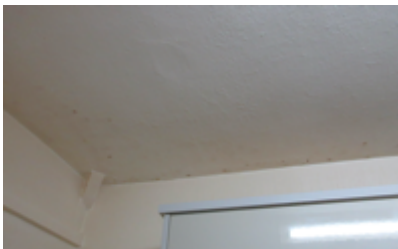
	Repair needs	Carry out tree work.	3
		Arrange for regular arborist inspections of the mature trees.	4
3.10	Monuments		
3.10.1	Description	There is a stone monument with lead dressings and a bench in the centre of the site. There is a wall mounted inscribed tabled to the founder of the Almshouses.	
	Condition  	Repairs to the monument including consolidation of the stone were carried out in 2014 have been successful with only very minor deterioration having occurred since. Consolidation of this type is not a one-off solution and further treatment is likely to be needed to maintain the condition of the stone. There is some very minor loose pointing present. The tablet is in fair condition, some of the lettering is showing signs of wear but no immediate action is needed.	

	 		
	Repair needs	Repoint isolated areas. Carry out further limewater treatment. Restore tablet.	2 4 4
3.11	Outbuildings		
3.11.1	Description	There are four detached brick buildings in use as store rooms or laundries. There is a metal container used for storage.	
	Condition	Reasonable, the buildings are not heated and are subject to relatively heavy use, internal finishes and decorations are showing signs of wear.	
	Repair needs	None.	
3.11.2	Binstores	There is space to store wheelie bins to the sides of the cottages.	
	Condition	This arrangement appears to be effective.	
	Repair needs	None.	

3.12	External signage		
3.12.1	Description	Some original cast iron signage is present.	
	Condition	Fair.	
			
	Repair needs	None.	
3.13	External Lighting and Associated Cabling		
3.13.1	Description	There are various building mounted lighting and bollards around the site.	
	Condition	Reasonable, older fittings are showing signs of age. Some diffusers are yellowed and dirty. As the inspection was carried out during daylight it was not possible to check the efficacy of the lighting.	
			
	Repair needs	Consider replacing the older lights with newer and more efficient LED lighting.	3

4.0 Interior

4.1	Roof Spaces (including access and insulation)		
4.1.1	Generally	There are loft hatches in each cottage.	
	Condition  No. 2  No. 5  No.10	Roofspaces are insulated with around 200mm fibreglass insulation. The insulation in the loft in No. 5, 6, 9, 10 is disturbed. This is a cold bridge and will lead to condensation. The roofs still have the original sand and lime torching present to the underside of the tiles. This used to be fitted as a secondary line of defence instead of roofing felt. Torching has become dry and brittle. Once considered an archaic skill there are now more tradespeople able to reapply torching.	
	Repair needs	Relay insulation. Re-torch areas as necessary.	1 3

4.2	Ceilings (including exposed beams)		
4.2.1	Generally	Lath and plaster ceilings, some have been over boarded. Some ceilings have artex finish. These could contain asbestos.	
	Condition  No. 2  No.6  No.14	Staining was noted to No. 2 (bathroom), all is now dry. There is staining to the kitchen ceiling in No. 14. Cracking was noted to No. 6 (living room), No. 9 (hall, kitchen, living room, bedroom 1), No. 12 (living room, kitchen), No.13 (bedroom), No. 14 (living room, kitchen, bedroom).	
	Repair needs	Fill cracks and redecorate ceilings. Apply stain block and redecorate. Maintain an asbestos register.	3 3 1

4.3	Walls and Partitions (including lintels)	
4.3.1	Generally	Painted plastered masonry walls, some papered. Laundry and store rooms have painted brick walls.
	Condition  No.6  No.10   No.12	Cracking was noted to No. 5 (bedroom), No. 6 (living room). Damp was noted to the kitchen walls in No. 10 and No. 12, this is located next to the external door and needs further investigation. Staining was also noted to the external wall. There is a water main that enters the property. Further investigation required to ascertain if there is a likely leak from the water main. Damp staining was noted in the bedroom of No. 12, just above the window sill. No obvious signs of water ingress. It could be a result of condensation and needs further investigation. The original plaster in this age of property is composed of sand and lime with animal hair reinforcement. The bond between the wall surface and plaster breaks down and in many properties the plaster is partly held in place by the wallpaper. It is likely that areas of original plaster will become detached when stripping wallpaper and the extent of this can be greater than first thought. Minor cracks should be filled when decorating.

	 No.12		
	Repair needs	Fill cracks and redecorate.	3
		Damp patches require further investigation.	3
4.4	Fireplaces and Chimney Breasts		
4.4.1	Description	Gas fires in living rooms. Built up chimney breasts in bedrooms.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
4.5	Floors		
4.5.1	Generally	Solid floors throughout, finishes include carpet and vinyl.	
	Condition	Fair.	
	Repair needs	None.	

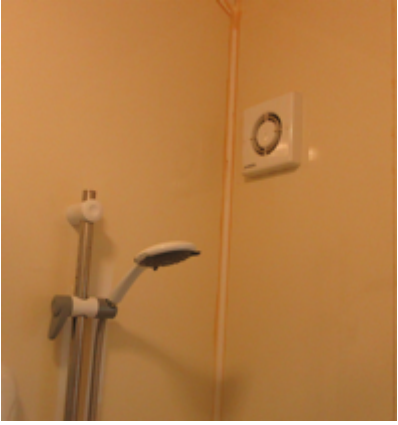
4.6	Internal Joinery (including doors and ironmongery)		
4.6.1	Generally	Painted ledged doors.	
	Condition   No.13   No.14	Generally fair. There are gaps to the external door in the bedroom of No. 13 & No.14, rot was also noted.	

	Repair needs	Replace or repair external doors.	1
		Splice repair to rotten door frame.	1
4.7	Staircases		
4.7.1	Generally	None.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not applicable.	
4.8	Fittings (including coats of arms)		
4.8.1	Description	None.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not applicable.	
4.9	Decorations		
4.9.1	Generally	Walls and ceilings are painted, some are papered.	
	Condition	Apart from any stained and cracked areas noted earlier, most decorations are good or fair.	
	Repair needs	None.	

4.10	Built-in Cupboards, Kitchen Units and Bathroom Fittings		
4.10.1	Cottage Kitchens	All kitchens were installed in 2019.	
	Condition 	Generally good. Back board to one kitchen unit is loose in cottage No.10	
	Repair needs	Refit back board.	3
4.10.2	Bath/shower rooms	Cottages are fitted with WC's, shower trays with screens and washbasins.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
4.10.3	Laundry	There are laundries with washing machine and dryer, and a sluice sink.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
4.11	Signage		
4.11.1	Description	There is fire and directional signage in the common areas.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	

5.0 Services and Installations

5.1	Electricity Supply (up to meter)		
5.1.1	Description	Supplies run to each cottage. There are various communal meter cupboards.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	
5.2	Electrical Installation (including Safety Assessment)		
5.2.1	Fixed wiring installation	Each cottage has its own consumer unit; these are fitted with MCB's and RCD's.	
	Condition	Some of the units are plastic, which is not in accordance with the latest regulations, although this is not a defect. The date of the last Electrical Installation Condition Report is September 2020. The electrical installations are regularly inspected and tested. Electrical Safety First and the Almshouse Association recommend that periodic inspection and testing is carried out at least every 5 years or on the change of occupancy. The numbers of sockets are below current recommendations and multiple adaptors are in use in places. Insufficient sockets to cottage No. 13. There was limited access to the consumer unit in No. 6 due to personal belongings and furniture situated in front of the cupboard. The extractor fan is located in wet area shower of cottage No. 9, No.10 & No.14. Check to	
	 No.13   No.10		

	 No.14	ensure the fan is SELV (Safety Extra Low Voltage) Light fitting in toilet of No. 10 is not a sealed light fitting. The number of sockets could be increased at the same time as any other electrical work.	
	Repair needs	Rewire flats to remove aluminium cable, replace fuses and increase number of socket outlets. Replace ceiling pendant with sealed light fitting to No.10 Check extractor fan zoning and ensure correct type of extractor is installed, i.e SELV.	2 1 4
5.2.2	Lighting	Lighting is a mixture of low energy fluorescent, and LED lights with only a few older, less efficient, incandescent light bulbs remaining.	
	Condition	The number and location of lighting outlets appears to be adequate. Incandescent light bulbs started to be banned from 2009 onwards under energy efficiency regulations. Further bans include all Halogen lights from the 1st September 2021 and high energy fluorescent tubes from the 1st September 2023.	
	Repair needs	Consider replacement with more modern and energy efficient LED lights as the opportunity arises.	3

5.2.3	Portable appliances	Residents provide their own white goods.	
	Condition	Electrical items within the cottages belonging to the residents are not subject to HPLC's Electrical Equipment Testing (EET) formerly PAT Testing. Electrical items within the cottages belonging to HPLC e.g. fridge-freezers, ovens, cookers & cooker hoods are inspected and tested by HPLC. The current guidance from the Almshouse Association states: "There is always the risk that residents' personal items in common use such as electric irons or vacuum cleaners develop frayed leads. Similarly the microwave oven, with the build-up of food debris on the ceiling panel can arc across the wave generator causing not only over heating but an apparent explosion. Trustees can safeguard themselves from criticism (by families, friends, relatives or the press) by ensuring that Portable Appliance Testing is carried out regularly". It would be sensible to PAT test appliances at the same time as inspecting and testing the fixed electrical wiring installation. The cost of this needs to be considered but is relatively low and may possibly be recovered through service charges.	
	Repair needs	Consider testing all portable electrical appliances.	3
5.2.4	Television reception	There is a communal system to the cottages.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	

5.2.5	Emergency call system	There is hard wired warden call system present.	
	Condition	This was not tested in any way but no concerns were reported.	
	Repair needs	None.	
5.2.6	Telephone system	There appear to be landline telephone connections to each cottage.	
	Condition	Installation of external telephone cables is extremely messy and has been done very poorly in places with loose and redundant cables. Most of the fascia boards are covered with cables and in other places it is messy.	
	Repair needs	Remove redundant cables.	3
		Ensure future cables are fitted neatly.	3
5.3	Gas Supply		
5.3.1	Description	There is a gas supply to each cottage, this is concealed.	
	Condition	The systems are regularly safety checked.	
	Repair needs	None.	
5.4	Gas Installation (including safety assessment)		
5.4.1	Description	Gas serves boilers in the kitchens, these were replaced in 2012.	
	Condition	The date of the last gas inspection is 3 rd May 2024.	
	Repair needs	None.	

5.5	Oil Installation		
5.5.1	Description	There is no oil installation to the property.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not applicable.	
5.6	Water Supply and Plumbing		
5.6.1	Description	Each cottage has its own water supply.	
	Condition	The last Risk Assessment was carried out on 9th September 2020. The communal cottage and No. 5 and 14 were inspected. Recent HSE guidance has clarified the need for all water supplies within buildings to be regularly risk assessed and not just areas with stored water. This means that domestic installations will need to be assessed as well. There is further advice and guidance available on the HSE website. This also states "This is especially important in residential buildings, where vulnerable people may be at risk, where the accommodation is provided specifically for a group who may be susceptible to legionellosis." There is regular monitoring of water temperatures.	
	Repair needs	Carry out Legionella Risk Assessments for all cottages.	1

5.7	Hot Water and Heating Installation		
5.7.1	Hot water	There are gas combi boilers in the kitchens providing hot water.	
	Condition	All appear to be in good condition. There is a programme of regular testing and certification in place. Latest guidance from the HSE has confirmed that Legionella Risk Assessments are now needed for all non-residential premises whether or not they have stored water. See also Appendix 2.	
	Repair needs	Carry out Legionella Risk Assessments for all cottages.	1
5.7.2	Primary heating	Cottages are fitted with radiators; there are room thermostats and thermostatic radiator valves fitted.	
	Condition	Radiators are in good condition.	
	Repair needs	None.	
5.7.3	Secondary heating	Some electric fires and heaters are present.	
	Condition	Good.	
	Repair needs	None.	

5.8	Above Ground Drainage (including sanitary goods)		
5.8.1	Description	WC's, washbasins and sinks all drain to external gullies; there are external cast iron soil stacks to ventilate the run. Gullies are open "by-law" type gullies with mortar benching.	
	Condition    	There are no wire balloons to the top of most of the external soil stacks, these stop birds dropping debris down the pipes. Some gulley surrounds are cracked as are a few gullies. Many of the gullies no longer operate as by law gullies as pipework has been adapted over time so water loss from the open part is less of a problem although there are more general concerns about the below ground drainage installation.	

		
Repair needs	Provide wire balloon to the top of the soil stacks. Repair gulley surrounds.	2 3

5.9	Below Ground Drainage and Disposal System	
5.9.1	Description	Manhole covers are of type which could not be safely lifted without risk of damage in the course of the inspection.
	Condition     	There are two blocked manholes to the east of the site. The drainage appears to be original and, at 97 years, it is likely to need increasing maintenance in time. A CCTV survey of the drainage should be carried out along with water testing of the gulley to determine the condition of the drainage. It is likely that some repairs or replacement will be needed. The large trees and recent hot summers may have hastened any problems. Note that from the 1st October 2011, most sewers (drains shared with two or more properties) are now the responsibility of Severn Trent Water, this includes responsibility for clearing blockages. Whilst none of the individual residents pay's their own water bills currently this could be considered if major work is needed to the below ground drainage. Several covers are corroded.

			
	Repair needs	Clear blockage. Carry out a CCTV survey of the drainage and water testing of the gulleys. Consider painting corroded medium duty covers with a suitable paint.	1 2 3
5.10	Lightning Conductor Installations		
5.10.1	Description	None.	
	Condition	Not Applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not Applicable.	
5.11	Bells and Bell Frames		
5.11.1	Description	None.	
	Condition	Not Applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not Applicable.	

5.12	Security Installations		
5.12.1	Description	Doors have deadlocks, windows have lockable casement fasteners, there is an old alarm bell present.	
	Condition 	This is an average level of security.	
	Repair needs	None.	

6.0 Environmental And Other Issues

6.1	Environmental/Humidity Control		
6.1.1	Insulation	There is insulation in the roofspace and cavity walls.	
	Condition  No. 2	Good, some loft hatches are uninsulated.	
	Repair needs	Insulate loft hatches.	3
6.1.2	Ventilation of structure (roofs and floors)	There are airbricks present.	
	Condition	The timbers in the roof void have an average moisture content of 12%, which is dry.	
	Repair needs	None.	
6.1.3	Ventilation of rooms (kitchens, shower and bathrooms, habitable rooms)	There are extractor fans present to kitchens and bath and shower rooms.	
	Condition	There are no particular or widespread problems with condensation or mould growth apparent. Where individual properties are affected this is noted elsewhere in this report. Mould to ceilings and walls in section 4.2.1 and 4.3.1, floors in section 4.5.1, shower rooms in 4.10.2,	
	Repair needs	None.	

6.2	Hazardous and Deleterious Materials		
6.2.1	Description	There are several potential asbestos containing materials as noted elsewhere in this report.	
	Condition	Current legislation (The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012) requires that any asbestos in common areas of properties is recorded and managed. Asbestos fibres were included in many different types of building materials, and may be released when these materials are damaged, disturbed or otherwise exposed. These fibres can cause a hazard to health when inhaled. There is a risk that any work activity that intrudes beyond the surface finish of this building may expose or disturb asbestos fibres and thereby create a potential health hazard. An asbestos register is in place and is reviewed annually by the Building Manager.	
	Repair needs	Continue to review asbestos register.	

6.3	Fire Safety Installations (including emergency escape)		
6.3.1	General	Cottages are fitted with smoke detectors; means of escape are reasonable with all rooms leading to an external door. Common areas are fitted with alarm and emergency lighting systems and portable firefighting equipment.	
	Condition	The last emergency lighting test was carried out on 22nd January 2024. Emergency lighting is subject to a 20-minute test every month. Access to the roofspaces is very limited but there appear to be some gaps in the party walls between the cottages. There are gaps to the party walls as noted in section 4.1.1/2 this is a fire risk. The lack of fire breaks in the roof space is a Category 2 Hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.	
	Repair needs	Fill gaps in firewalls.	3
6.3.2	Fire risk assessment	A fire risk assessment is needed for the common parts of the building. Currently, the only common area that all residents have access to is the common room and laundry buildings.	
	Condition	The last Fire Risk Assessment was carried out on 29 th April 2023.	
	Repair needs	None.	

6.4	Other Health and Safety Concerns (noise, trips and falls, radon etc.)		
6.4.1	Description	The property is not in a Radon affected area. There is no defibrillator present.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	Not applicable.	
6.5	Wildlife		
6.5.1	Bats and other protected species	No evidence of bats, or bat droppings was seen in the building at the time of the inspection.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	None.	
6.5.2	Pests	Nothing noted.	
	Condition	Not applicable.	
	Repair needs	None.	

7.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Repair items and approximate costs are included in the spreadsheet in Appendix 1

The following headings are used:

Priority 1: Very urgent work requiring immediate action including health and safety issues.

Priority 2: Urgent work not requiring immediate action, but should be addressed and completed in year 1.

Priority 3: Work to be completed within the Quinquennium (5 years).

Priority 4: Likely major repairs beyond the Quinquennium (5 years).

7.1 Areas Requiring to be Monitored

None.

7.2 Suggested Improvements of the Buildings

A programme of electrical inspection and testing is in place. Best practice is to provide a sticker copy of the current certificate adjacent to the consumer unit or boiler.

Testing of the residents' own electrical appliances could also be put into place (see Appendix 4).

7.3 Suggested Improvements in Routine Maintenance

Reactive maintenance appears to be well covered but planned and cyclical maintenance procedures could be improved:

- Rainwater goods should be checked and cleaned out annually in the autumn after leaf fall.
- Gas servicing is annual but it is suggested that a duplicate record be kept on site as well. Best practice in this respect is to provide a copy of the current gas and electrical tests as a sticker at the consumer unit and gas meter.

An excellent maintenance plan is available from the Almshouse Association in Annexe F of "Standards of Almshouse Management" also available on their website. This is in Word format and can be adapted to suit the particular needs of the property.

7.4 Brief Recommendations for Improving Energy Efficiency

See separate report.

APPENDIX 1

Summary of Approximate Costs

APPENDIX 2

HSE GUIDANCE ON LEGIONELLA 2014

Health and Safety
Executive

Shared premises and residential accommodation: Landlords

Residential accommodation: Landlords

2.138 Landlords who provide residential accommodation, as the person in control of the premises or responsible for the water systems in their premises, have a legal duty to ensure that the risk of exposure of tenants to legionella is properly assessed and controlled. This duty extends to residents, guests, tenants and customers. They can carry out a risk assessment themselves if they are competent, or employ somebody who is.

2.139 Where a managing (or letting) agent is used, the management contract should clearly specify who has responsibility for maintenance and safety checks, including managing the risk from legionella. Where there is no contract or agreement in place or it does not specify who has responsibility, the duty is placed on whoever has control of the premises and the water system in it, and in most cases, this will be the landlord themselves.

2.140 All water systems require a risk assessment but not all systems require elaborate control measures. A *simple* risk assessment may show that there are no real risks from legionella, but if there are, implementing appropriate measures will prevent or control these risks. The law requires simple, proportionate and practical actions to be taken, including identifying and assessing sources of risk, managing the risk, preventing or controlling the risk; and periodically checking that any control measures are effective.

2.141 For most residential settings, the risk assessment may show the risks are low, in which case no further action may be necessary, eg housing units with small domestic-type water systems where water turnover is high. If the assessment shows the risks are insignificant and are being properly managed to comply with the law, no further action may be required, but it is important to review the assessment periodically in case anything changes in the system. However, the frequency of inspection and maintenance will depend on the system and the risks it presents.

2.142 Simple control measures can help manage the risk of exposure to legionella and should be maintained, such as:

- flushing out the system before letting the property;
- avoiding debris getting into the system (eg ensure the cold water tanks, where fitted, have a tight-fitting lid);
- setting control parameters (eg setting the temperature of the calorifier to ensure water is stored at 60 °C);
- making sure any redundant pipework identified is removed;
- advising tenants to regularly clean and disinfect showerheads.

2.143 Landlords should inform tenants of the potential risk of exposure to legionella and its consequences and advise on any actions arising from the findings of the risk assessment, where appropriate. Tenants should be advised to inform the landlord if the hot water is not heating properly or if there are any other problems with the system, so that appropriate action can be taken.

2.144 The risk may increase where the property is unoccupied for a short period. It is important that water is not allowed to stagnate within the water system and so

dwellings that are vacant for extended periods should be managed carefully. As a general principle, outlets on hot and cold water systems should be used at least once a week to maintain a degree of water flow and minimise the chances of stagnation. To manage the risks during non-occupancy, consider implementing a suitable flushing regime or other measures, such as draining the system if the dwelling is to remain vacant for long periods.

2.145 Where there are difficulties gaining access to occupied housing units, appropriate checks can be made by carrying out inspections of the water system, eg when undertaking mandatory visits such as gas safety checks or routine maintenance visits.

2.146 It may be impractical to risk assess every individual residential unit, eg where there are a significant number of units under the control of the landlord, such as Housing Associations or Councils. In such cases, a representative proportion of the premises for which they have responsibility should initially be assessed, on the basis of similar design, size, age and water supply, with the entire estate eventually assessed on a rolling programme of work.

APPENDIX 3

SPAB Guidance on cement pointing

Technical Q&A 21: Inappropriate Cement Pointing

The type of mortar that someone proposes for repointing joints in the walls of an old building is a good test of whether they should be working on such buildings at all. Douglas Kent, the SPAB Technical Secretary, explains why - and what you do if an inappropriate cement mortar has been used.

Q. Why is hard cement pointing inappropriate for an old building?

A. Simply because it can disfigure and hasten the decay of historic masonry. Portland cement became particularly popular after the Second World War. Whereas modern buildings rely on such materials to seal walls and exclude moisture, the permeable lime mortars widely used on old buildings allowed them to 'breathe' – the 'raincoat' versus 'overcoat' effect. In some cases, lime mortar pointing weathers back to the stage repointing is needed, but if this is done with impervious cement (a common mistake), erosion of the bricks and stones themselves occurs in preference as they become the most permeable part of the wall and suffer the greatest frost and salt action. Dense, cement-rich mortars also develop hairline cracks from shrinkage or, with old buildings on shallow foundations, from minor structural movement. Lime mortar better accommodates movement and, because it is 'autogenous', any minor cracks that do develop will self-heal. Remember too that modern forms of joint finish associated with cement can form ledges, trapping water.

Q. How do I tell whether inappropriate cement pointing has been used?

A. A very hard, smooth and dull grey mortar typically indicates an unsuitable mix rich in ordinary Portland cement, as opposed to the softer, more open-textured and lighter coloured mortar bound with lime that is compatible with old masonry. Furthermore, the latter may contain impurities such as chalk from the lime-burning process. Featheredging along margins is characteristic of cement, as is a weather-struck (angled), bucket-handle (concave) or ribbon pointed (protruding) joint finish. Weathering characteristics differ as well. Unlike lime-based pointing that gradually erodes back, cementitious mortar cracks and drops out in short sections or is left standing proud of decayed bricks or stones.

Q. If my building pre-dates the late 1800s, should all inappropriate cement pointing be removed?

A. Not necessarily. Although remedial action should ideally involve removal, this may cause further damage to the fabric. A small area should therefore be removed as a trial and a pragmatic approach adopted. Where the pointing adheres well, it is probably best to leave it to age naturally, especially if, fortuitously, problems such as damp have not ensued. Sometimes a compromise may be possible, perhaps just by removing selected areas where localised deterioration has occurred, and patch pointing with a more suitable mix. Weathering over time often breaks the bond of the remaining cementitious material, so patience can be rewarded.

Q. What is the best method of removing inappropriate cement mortar?

A. Hard pointing can possibly be cut out with hand tools, such as chisels or quirks and a light club hammer. The use of a hammer and bolster is not recommended. An alternative technique involves the use of a handsaw, particularly for fine joints. Cutting discs, reciprocating blades and air tools with adapted masonry carving chisels can be helpful in removing detrimental cement mortar, but they must be properly used, and only entrusted to highly experienced operatives. Incorrectly used, power tools can cause untold damage to stone or brick surfaces. Regardless of the technique, the importance of trials cannot be overemphasised, and great care must be exercised to avoid damage to the edges, or 'arrises', of bricks and stones.

Q. What should I use to replace inappropriate cement pointing?

A. Generally, a soft and permeable lime mortar that matches the colour, texture and profile of any surviving lime pointing. Where there is none, and it is necessary to design a new mortar, this must be weaker than the bricks or blocks and take into account site exposure. Recently, cement has been added to modify lime mortars, but this is discouraged now that a wider range of limes is obtainable. If in doubt about the joint profile, a flush or nearly flush finish is usually sympathetic or there may be local vernacular precedents to follow. It is important that work is undertaken by someone familiar with lime-based materials. The SPAB may be able to advise on suitable contractors or courses.

APPENDIX 4

Almshouse Association Guidance on Portable Appliance Testing (PAT testing).

The testing of portable appliances or portable equipment needs careful consideration by Trustees.

In meeting their "Duty of Care" towards residents, Trustees have an ill-defined, rather vague responsibility for the overall safety of those beneficiaries of the charity who dwell within the almshouses in their trust. "More generally, legal precedent and good practice means that the duty of care should be considered as applying to all aspects of Trustees' work in making decisions about their charity." (Charity Commission Pamphlet CC3 "The Essential Trustee. What you need to know")

Trustees can safeguard themselves from criticism (by families, friends, relatives, the press!) or from self blame, in the case of a fatal accident, by ensuring Portable Appliance Testing is carried out.

The Risk: There is always the risk that items in common use such as electric irons or vacuum cleaners develop frayed leads with regular usage. These are a real danger since the user very often does not notice the gradual fraying or deterioration in a cable until it has become very dangerous indeed. Similarly the microwave, with the build up of food debris on the ceiling panel, quite apart from the micro-biological hazard, can arc across the wave generator and cause overheating or an apparent explosion. The "once a year" Christmas tree lights are another considerable danger – and one often overlooked or forgotten. These should all be checked once a year by a professional electrician.

Possible Procedures Start as you mean to go on! Several almshouse charities have commended the following as best practice. As part of the interview process, potential future residents will be briefed on the factors of size and storage associated with the dwelling in which they hope to live. It is an opportunity to mention that within a few weeks of taking up residence, all the "new" resident's personal, portable electrical appliances will be checked by the charity's NICEIC Qualified Electrician and safety certificates lodged with the Clerk/Secretary/Warden/Scheme Manager on completion. This is, it would be explained, a requirement of occupancy (covered in the Letter of Appointment) and would be at the new resident's expense. Thus, as part of the discipline of moving into an almshouse, with possibly less general space and storage space, individuals would be more discerning about throwing away old, perhaps unsafe, electrical equipment.

There are obvious benefits. The new resident feels that their safety is very high on the priority list and family members are reassured. The sweetening of the pill is, of course, the later

disclosure that the charity will fund the exercise annually thereafter (with costs subsumed in WMC generally).

If any of the resident's appliances are found to be defective, under the NICEIC Rulings, the electrical engineer must make the appliance unusable. This is usually achieved by cutting off the lead in close proximity to the equipment or appliance (historically they were only required to cut off the plug!). The Clerk/Trustees will very soon get to know of the difficulty! If necessarily, acting charitably, Trustees can very quickly arrange to buy and provide a new toaster or electric blanket out of the charity's funds and once again maintain the very special relationship that exists between the Trustees and the residents.