

COBURNS PARTY WALL

Party Wall and Neighbourly Matters

COBURNS PARTY WALL

Party Wall & Neighbourly Matters

www.coburnspartywall.co.uk

No responsibility for loss or damage caused to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of the material included in this publication can be accepted by the authors or Coburns Party Wall.

© Coburns Party Wall January 2023. No part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means including graphic, electronic, or mechanical, without the written permission of Coburns Party Wall.

GUIDANCE NOTE

ASSESSING THE SCALE OF DAMAGE

ASSESSING THE SCALE OF DAMAGE

Although not particularly common for the most notifiable party wall works, damage can occur to an adjoining owner's property.

Understandably, most owners are unfamiliar with how to assess the scale of the damage and so their immediate reaction is one of great concern.

This note is intended to provide a brief and simple guide for owners to help reduce unnecessary concern in relation to minor damage and conversely, where damage is more significant, indicate when quick action might be required.

Cracks can be caused by a number of factors. These can include impact, vibration, settlement, changes in weather or ground movement. Commonly, the specific cause relates to the nature of the works and how they have been undertaken.

We are often asked, "Is it structural?"

Cracks in walls are not uncommon, but it is not always obvious what level of cracking should cause concern and when building repairs might be necessary.

A widely recognised scale often used by insurance companies is the BRE Digest 251 Assessment of Damage to Low-Rise Buildings

This scale can be helpful in understanding the level of damage that has occurred.

THE SCALE

Aesthetic - Only requiring redecoration

0 - Hairline cracks less than 0.1mm.

No action required.

Hairline cracks are classed as negligible.

1 - Fine cracks of up to 1mm.

Fine cracks can be treated easily using normal decoration.

Damage generally restricted to internal wall finishes; cracks rarely visible in external brickwork.

2 - Crack widths up to 5mm.

Cracks easily filled. Recurrent cracks can be masked by suitable linings.

Cracks not necessarily visible externally; some external repointing may be required to ensure weather-tightness. Doors and windows may stick slightly and require easing and adjusting.

Serviceability - Affecting weather-tightness or operation of door and windows

3 - Crack widths of 5 to 15mm (or several of e.g. 3mm).

Cracks that require some opening up and can be patched by a mason. Repointing of external brickwork and possibly a small amount of brickwork to be replaced.

Doors and windows sticking. Service pipes may fracture. Weather-tightness often impaired.

4 - Extensive damage, cracks 15 to 25mm.

Extensive damage which requires breaking-out and replacing sections of walls, especially over doors and windows.

Windows and door frames distorted, floor sloping noticeably. Walls leaning or bulging noticeably, some loss of bearing in beams. Service pipes disrupted. Typical crack widths are 15 to 25mm, but also depends on the number of cracks.

Stability - Requiring structural intervention

5 - Structural damage, cracks greater than 25mm.

Structural damage that requires a major repair job, involving partial or complete rebuilding.

Beams lose bearing, walls lean badly and require shoring. Windows broken with distortion. Danger of instability. Typical crack widths are greater than 25mm but depends on the number of cracks.

Note - further consideration may be required where cracks are widening over time.