



HARRIS
ASSOCIATES

**TOP 5 MOST
INAPPROPRIATE
WORKS TO
HISTORIC
BUILDINGS**



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Harris Associates are an award winning RICS building consultancy providing advisory and project led services at every stage of a buildings life cycle, across commercial and residential sectors.



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Window Replacement

Offence: Replacing original good quality timber windows with inappropriate modern aluminium or PVC-U casements.

Remedy: If there is a genuine need to replace old / original windows due to ageing, damage or the windows and frames being beyond repair then seek advice (preferable from a Chartered Building Surveyor). There are some excellent products on the market which are now combining the requirements of the heritage boffins and satisfying the energy conservation and low maintenance requirements of the 21st century. Even if a building is listed it is not necessarily the case that double glazing cannot be installed.

Injection DPC

Offence: Unnecessarily injecting chemical damp-proof courses (or injecting them incompetently), and re-plastering or rendering main walls with cement-based materials rather than traditional lime, thereby trapping damp in the walls.

Remedy: Start again and do the job properly. Sometimes a particular situation will require more than a simple “one size fits all” solution. Damp proofing “specialists” have a product to sell – take some advice from an independent surveyor who will look at the overall situation and adopt a more comprehensive and holistic approach.

Blocking Ventilation

Offence: Encouraging damp, rot, beetle infestation by blocking up original ventilation to floors, voids and roof spaces. Other exacerbating factors often including permitting high ground levels (such as raised flower beds and planters) to build up against external walls.

Remedy: Reintroduce ventilation to achieve the necessary cross flow of air. This can often be carried out in tandem with improvements in insulation. Reduce high ground levels where required to ensure grills and air vents are open to the outside air. Original ornate vents / grills may be aesthetically pleasing however – the

downside is that they can become easily blocked by dirt, debris and even over-painting. Regular maintenance and inspection is recommended.

Structural Alterations

Offence: Removal of chimney breasts and / or any other load-bearing internal spine walls without providing adequate support to the adjacent and overhead structures.

Remedy: Avoiding these types of problems is the best remedy! Engage the services of a Structural Engineer and / or Chartered Building Surveyor to assess the existing make-up of the building. Gaining access to rooms or even other demises above, below and next door to the subject area is a paramount importance. And please do not assume that what appears to be timber studwork isn't load bearing – it often is!

Careful and diligent pre-design survey and investigation is key, followed by the structural calculation process and finally the adoption of a robust opening up, support reassessment and construction methodology.

Ignoring Façade Maintenance Requirements

Offence: Neglecting badly eroded mortar joints to external masonry, allowing damp to penetrate and frost damage to occur.

Remedy: This is a simple one – regular maintenance. With historic buildings there is an inherent need to carry out more regular maintenance than for modern properties. The cost, both actually and financially, of not carrying out relatively simple repairs such as repointing can be significant. For example, the year-on-year net effect of not repointing can lead to damage to the bricks themselves and an exponential increase in the volume of mortar joint deterioration.

As a footnote to this item, many historic buildings will comprise brick façades with lime-based mortar joints. The use of modern cement-based mortars will lead to a lack of flexibility and will also prevent the exterior façades from “breathing”. Using lime-based mortars is a must plus the adoption of the appropriate repointing styles.



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