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Dear Simon

RE: 30 Queen Street, Neath, SA11 1DL

I met with the Fire Officer, Mark Sheppard, together with two of his colleagues, at the premises last Thursday afternoon. Mr Tony Young of Camilleri Construction, Cardiff also attended at my request, in anticipation that emergency works might be required in the near future to make the building safe. I was able to enter the right-hand part of the main building at ground floor level – the Fire Officer considered the remaining parts of the building not safe to access. My findings and recommendations summarise as follows:

MAIN ROOF

The main roof is concrete-tile finished, and of conventional rafter and purlin construction. A main timber truss provides support to the purlins about midway between party walls. Inspection from Queen Street shows ridge tiles to be missing but front slope roof tiles to be mainly intact. (See Photo 1.)

Photo 1.

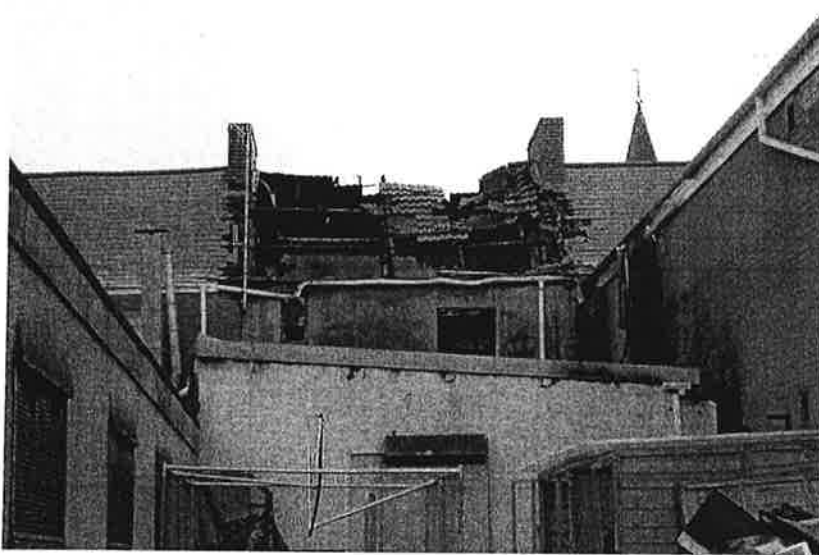


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Company Registration No: 4858891 **Registered Office:** 50 Walter Road, Swansea, SA1 5PW.

Inspection from the rear of the premises shows the majority of rear slope roof tiles and rafters to no longer be present – purlins and main roof truss visually appear badly fire-damaged and at least one purlin appears to have dropped. Both adjoining properties have a slate roof finish – slates have been lost above both party walls. Both party walls are now exposed to the weather, and water ingress into the walls is almost certainly taking place. (*See Photo 2.*) The condition of the roof is such that a full-collapse of the roof could occur at any time, particularly should the weather become windy. In view of the risk to the public safety I recommend the main roof be taken down as a matter of urgency.

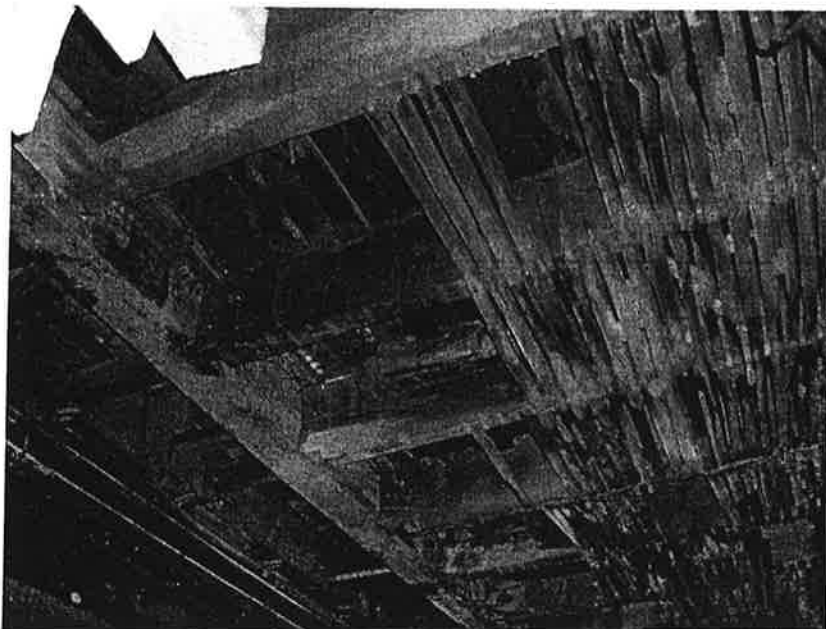
Photo 2.



FIRST FLOOR

First floor construction comprises timber joists spanning front-to-rear. At the front wall the joists were notched into the web of a steel beam spanning the shop-front window. Movement has occurred between the timber joists and steel beam resulting in the joists no longer bearing onto the beam. (*See Photo 3.*)

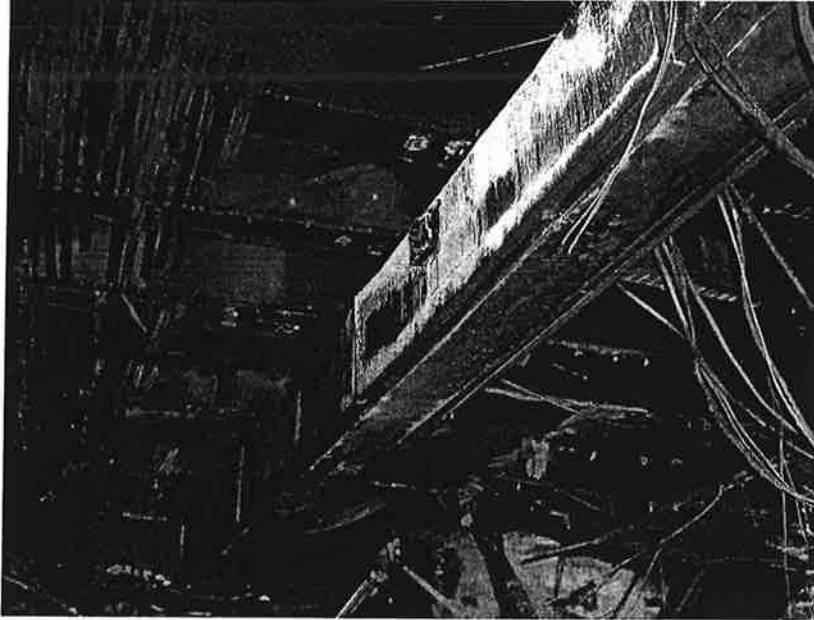
Photo 3.



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Approximately midway between the front wall and rear wall a steel beam is present below the joists spanning the width of the shop – the steel beam appears to be relatively undamaged. (See Photo 4.)

Photo 4.

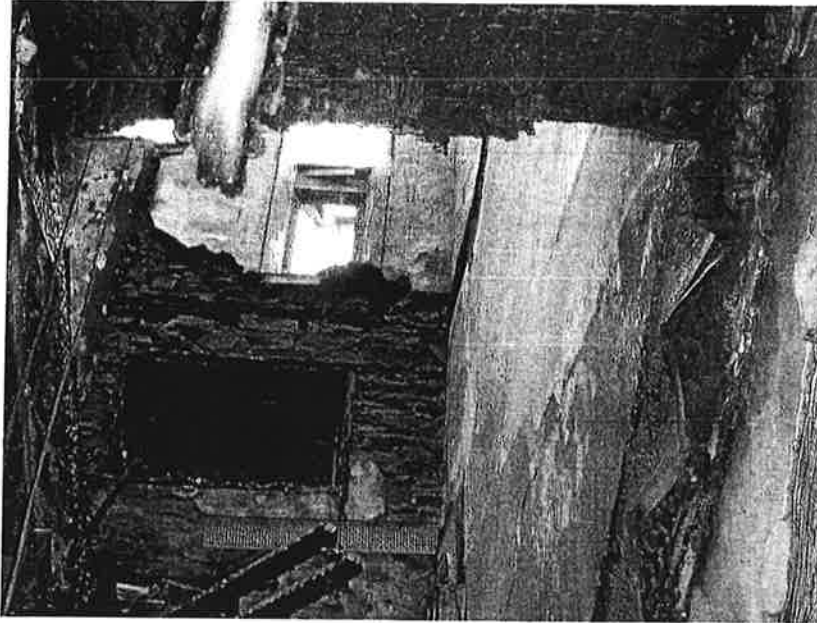


The majority of joists no longer extend to the rear wall due to collapse of the fire-damaged floor construction. (See Photos 5 and 6.) The stairs up to the first floor have been destroyed by the fire. The condition of the first floor construction is such that the floor is unsafe and at risk of further collapse.

Photo 5.



Photo 6.



GROUND FLOOR (above basement)

The floor is timber construction. The Fire Department have formed a 'safe' access over the right-hand part of the floor which was necessary to access residual smouldering of the fire within the basement. The remainder of the floor is covered in fire debris and is considered unsafe to access. (See Photos 7 and 8.) Timber trimmer supports to the floor penetrate the party wall and some fire-spread has occurred into the left-hand part of the adjoining right-hand premises.

Photo 7.



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Photo 8.



FRONT WALL

SWALEC have excavated a trench full-width of the building to locate the incoming electric supply cable. The Fire Brigade have utilised this trench to form a small access for dealing with residual smouldering of the fire in the front part of the basement. As the opening is below the shop-front window I do not consider the opening to have adversely affected the stability of the front wall. A vertical crack can be seen in the right-hand party wall within the entrance lobby to the adjoining right-hand property. This crack, together with movement between shop-front beam and first floor joists, suggests outward distortion of the main front wall may have taken place. Lateral support previously provided to the front wall by first floor and roof constructions has been reduced by the fire damage. The wall comprises a full-width shop-front opening and two large first floor window openings and it is likely to be more cost-effective to take down and rebuild the wall than attempt to repair it.

REAR WALL

Close inspection not possible. Steel beam support to the wall is present above the opening into the single-storey rear extension. (See Photo 9.)

ACCESS FOR FORENSIC INSPECTION

I have spoken to Paul Willis of Hawkins, Bristol. He has advised that ideally he would like the ground floor propped from within the basement, the first floor propped over ground-storey height, and the first floor boarded over to protect against debris from the roof contaminating his investigation. My inspection of the property shows that temporary propping work and protections are not safely achievable, and that access into the building would need to be limited to the 'safe' corridor formed by the Fire Brigade in the right-hand part of the building.

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Photo 9.



RECOMMENDED WORKS TO MAKE THE BUILDING SAFE

Both myself and Tony Young of Camilleri Construction are of the opinion that the most appropriate course of action is for scaffolding to be erected externally to the front and rear main walls of the building and for a 'top-hat' then to be provided over the main building and partway across both adjoining premises. The building should then be carefully demolished down to ground floor level, fire debris cleared, and further inspection then carried out to establish works required to the basement. These works need to be carried out as a matter of urgency due to the risk to the public posed by the unsafe condition of the building. In the meantime consideration should be given to relocating the Heras fencing and barriers further into Queen Street to provide increased separation between the public and the building.

ADJOINING PROPERTIES

The premises to the left is a Charity Shop trading as 'Spaghetti Tree'. (See Photo 10.) The premises to the right is an adult learning centre trading as NPTC Group Queen Street Campus. (See Photo 3.) Both premises are presently not accessible from Queen Street due to Heras fencing extending across the frontage of both properties. As noted previously the party walls of both premises are now exposed to the weather, and some fire spread has occurred into the NPTC Group building from the basement of No. 30. I anticipate that both adjoining owners have submitted claims to their Buildings Insurers. Party Wall Surveyors will need to be appointed, and the extent of damage to both adjoining premises inspected and assessed.

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Photo 10.



Photo 11.

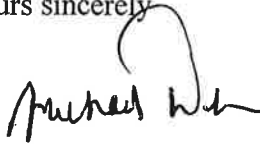


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NEATH CID INVOLVEMENT

I have been trying to get in touch with D.C. Andy Davies of Neath CID (tel: 07584 771198) to establish whether the premises are still being treated as a Crime Scene. I've left messages on his voicemail but haven't received a return call. The premises are presently cordoned off and agreement will be required from Neath CID prior to the carrying out of any works affecting the property.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael J Dean', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

MICHAEL J DEAN B.Sc.(Hons), C.Eng., M.I.C.E., F.I.Struct.E.
for Dean & Thomas Ltd