Common maintenance issues

Property inspections carried out when a house goes on the market regularly turn up a whole range of problems. Some could have been found and fixed earlier if regular home maintenance had been carried out.

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IT COULD be said that, from the moment a home is built, the materials begin to deteriorate and will require maintenance.

Materials life expectancy

All building materials have a life expectancy that will be impacted by the location, design and preservation process or maintenance applied to it.

Each era of construction has its own commonly found maintenance issues. For example:

- pre-1960s houses - the weatherboard cladding, timber foundation, timber joinery and roof
- circa 1970s houses - often aluminium joinery, timber cladding, plumbing and roof
- 1990s houses - often associated with plaster cladding and the much-publicised leaky building issue.

The Realsure Group has carried out over 25,000 property inspections or surveys over the past 22 years. As BOINZ-accredited building surveyors, the role when undertaking NZS 4306:2005 *Residential property inspection* surveys is to look for significant defects, urgent maintenance and gradual deterioration.

Rust and lichen on a roof.

Common maintenance issues

The following covers the maintenance issues or defects most commonly seen when surveying properties.

Roofs

The most common roof types seen are profiled metal, pressed metal tiles or concrete tile roofs.

On metal roofs, rust damage, lifting laps, damaged and loose fixings and surface coating deterioration are the most common defects.

Meanwhile, cracked and missing mortar, cracked and slipped tiles and erosion or


Peeling paint and missing putty on joinery.


Damage from leaking plumbing.

deterioration of the surface coating are the most common defects on concrete tile roofs.

On both these materials, lichen and moss build-up is common.

Left unchecked, all these issues can quickly escalate to cause failure to the roof and moisture issues within the roof void and home.

Damaged, sagging and blocked gutters and downpipes are often found and are a common cause of excessive moisture around the foundations. They can also allow moisture to flow back into the building.

Issues in accessible roof cavities include leaking from missing or loose nails, rot to rafters or the roof structure from leaking and missing or damp insulation. In older homes, it is also common to find borer and damage to rafters and roof structures.

Cladding

The most common forms of cladding are timber or fibre-cement weatherboard, brick veneer or plaster.

Rot damage, peeling paint or deteriorating stain finishes, splits, cracks or cupping are commonly found with weatherboard cladding. Cracked or loose bricks and cracked or missing mortar are often found with brick veneer.

Cracked cladding, bulging/drummy or peeling plaster and lichen and moss build-up are the most common issues with plaster cladding. These can be due to or an indicator of other issues with the cladding system and building and should be looked at holistically rather than in isolation to ensure the appropriate repairs are undertaken.

Gardens, grounds or paths built up against the cladding are another common maintenance issue that can cause damage or deterioration to the cladding and moisture ingress over time.

Foundations

Concrete slab-on-ground, pile or ring and pile foundations are the most common foundation types. However, usually only pile or ring and pile foundations have defects.

Borer and rot-damaged subfloor timbers are often found. While borer can be treated, widespread infestation can compromise the structural integrity of the timbers. Rot is generally a byproduct or indicator of a more-significant moisture issue that also needs to be investigated and addressed.

Rusted out pile to bearer fixings, wet timber framing, leaking plumbing, damaged flooring beneath wet areas or joinery and damp ground are also common. Damp ground can often be associated with paths built up against foundation vents restricting airflow, causing the dampness or even directing water into the foundation area.

Eroded or undermined foundations are also common.

Joinery

Timber or aluminium joinery are the two most typical joinery types.

In timber joinery, rot damage, cracked putty, peeling paint, rusted hinges and flashings, sticking or binding joinery and gaps or warped joinery are common defects.

The most common maintenance issues with aluminium joinery, particularly older joinery, include mitres that have opened up, worn friction stays, deteriorated rubber seals, broken hardware and damaged or rotten sills. Damaged or replaced sills are often seen with older aluminium joinery where there is single glazing and a lack of condensation channels.

While some of these issues can cause moisture ingress and damage to internal framing, ill-fitting or inoperable joinery can also result in internal ventilation and mould issues and air leakage that causes draughts.

Interior issues

Internally, moisture and mould are the most notable maintenance defects. Leaking showers are a common issue, whether caused by a lining, screen or plumbing defect or failure.

Mould in wet rooms, around joinery and on the backs of curtains is a typical problem, caused by a lack of ventilation or inadequate ventilation.

The simple habit of daily airing or installing adequate mechanical ventilation along with regular cleaning can often address this. However, mould around joinery can also be an indicator of external moisture or wind-driven rain ingress and should be monitored.

This is not an all-encompassing maintenance defects list. While some of the problems can be easily addressed and arguably form part of the normal maintenance of building materials, others will probably have caused more-significant issues before being found.

For more See BRANZ maintenance advice at www.maintainingmyhome.org.nz.