REPORT ON FIRE DAMAGED COTTAGE

AT

THATCHED COTTAGE, POND LANE, WORTHING, BN13 2RH

Name of Client: Manorwood

vkhp-consulting ltd
340 High Street
Dorking
Surrey
RH4 1QX

Tel: 01306 881012
E-mail: dkg@vkhp.co.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

vkhp-consulting ltd were appointed by Manorwood to provide a report on the structural validity of the fire damaged cottage with a view to advising as to what elements can be realistically salvaged, mindful of the historic interest of those elements.

The property was visited on Wednesday 28 January 2026 and the weather conditions were heavy overcast cloud cover after particularly heavy rainfall in the morning.

This report should also be read in conjunction with photographic Appendix A.

2. GENERAL CONDITION

The property had suffered fire damage approximately three years ago and has been left unattended since and is in generally poor condition, with none of the fire damaged thatch being removed and this has been left to rot on the first floor, and therefore the building is now open to the elements.

There is significant vegetation growth both within the fire damaged thatch and around the perimeter walls causing structural damage and spalling of the walls.

The chimney to the south gable is in very poor repair and is potentially unstable with a noticeable and significant lean to the east.

Significant vandalism has occurred to the building with all windows being broken, and most of the internal remaining fixtures and fittings have been broken/vandalised.

3. SALVAGEABLE ELEMENTS

The external masonry fabric of the building would appear to be in a reusable condition and there does not appear to be any significant indication of thermal shock to the building on the exterior walls.

There is a small bulge in the western elevation above the window but this does appear to be historic in nature.

However, the nature of the construction of the walls, which is loosely laid flints bonded with lime mortar (bungaroosh) would be susceptible to water ingress in its exposed state, and it is

possible that water has saturated into the walls particularly from wall plate level down, and any freeze/thaw action may well debond the walls which may require localised reconstruction, but since the internal area is unsafe to access, this would need some further investigation once the building has been made safe.

The majority of the rafters have been lost in the fire and the few that remain are badly damaged by fire or water and so none are salvageable. The walls plates are all heavily fire damaged and saturated and are not salvageable.

The main spine oak beam that supports the existing first floor joists has structurally failed under the weight of saturated thatch and is not salvageable, nor are many of the accompanying floor joists, and these would need to be removed as part of the soft internal strip out.

The Oak cross beam that spans onto the internal post has also split along its length and is not in a re-usable condition

The oak bressummer over the fireplace/bread oven appears to be in reasonable condition and can remain in-situ. The masonry of the fireplace itself below first floor level also appears sound.

The main support post that supports the failed spine beam and failed cross beam would also appear to be in reasonable condition and can be reused, and some of the first floor joists that span from the northern gable across the entrance lobby, could also potentially be salvaged and reused further to closer inspection and/or drying out.

On the first floor northern gable window there are some painted timber shutters, which again could potentially be salvaged and reused.

All internal fixtures and fittings such as light fittings, kitchen fittings, etc are beyond reuse and should form part of the strip out clearance.

The window framing to all windows are also beyond reasonable repair/reuse.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The first priority is to secure the site and strip all vegetation that is currently growing either in or on the property to prevent further damage to the structural fabric.

The remnants of rafters, the first floor structure and the remaining saturated thatch needs to be removed and carted away, except for those areas of the first floor structure noted above that could potentially be set aside for reuse.

The timber wall plate is badly rotted and this also needs to be removed. We would also suggest that the top of the wall is covered in the temporary condition in order to prevent further water ingress into the top of the wall causing damage given its structural form.

Once the site has been secured, further deliberations as to the extent of repairs and reinstatements can then be considered once safe access permits to view the structure in detail.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

Given the condition of the chimney flue noted above, I do not consider that any health and safety risk assessment would permit access for the soft strip without first making this chimney safe.

We would recommend that the chimney be carefully taken down to the top of the gable wall level and the brickwork set aside for reconstruction before any attempt at internal strip out is commenced or it be restrained in its current position with a structural scaffold. The latter appears to be excessive given it will need to be dismantled and rebuilt at some time as part of the works to the building.

6. SUMMARY

To summarise the above, we consider that the external walls, the fireplace and a limited number of internal oak elements can be salvaged and reused provided that all vegetation in and around the building is removed to prevent further damage, and the walls are protected as outlined above.

7. GENERAL EXCLUSIONS

The above report is based on a very limited visual inspection externally only and internals were only viewed through windows and doors due to safety matters together with some drone footage giving an overview of the building, and does not constitute a full survey of its current condition.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Manorwood and may not be used by other parties without the written consent of vkhp-consulting ltd.

[redacted]

David Barnard
IEng IMIStructE
Project Engineer

Date: 29 January 2026

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1 – Aerial showing vegetation

Photo 2 – Chimney 1

Photo 3 – Chimney 2

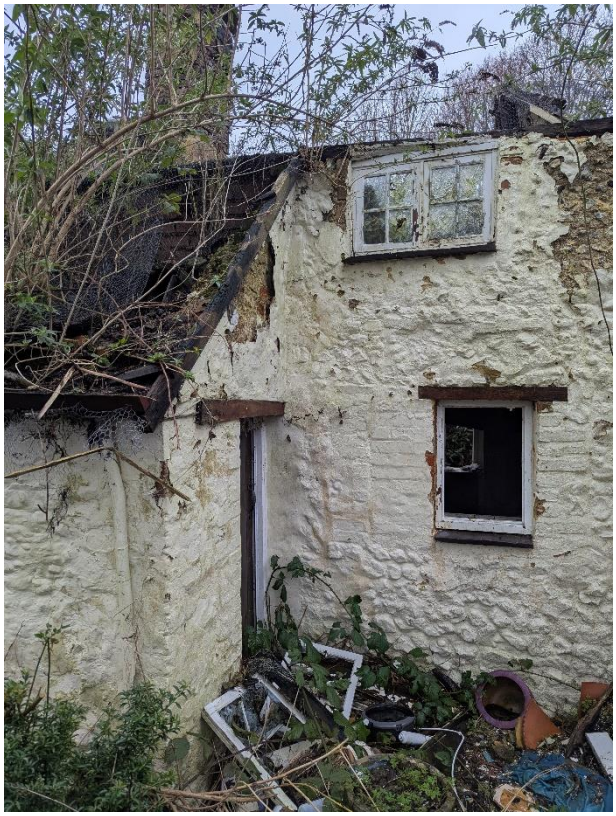

Photo 4 - External wall condition 1

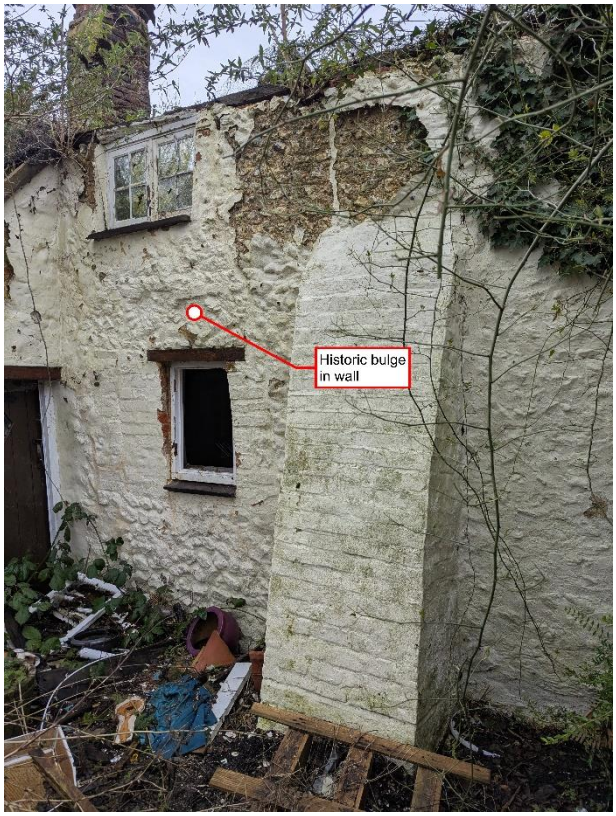

Photo 5 - External wall condition 2

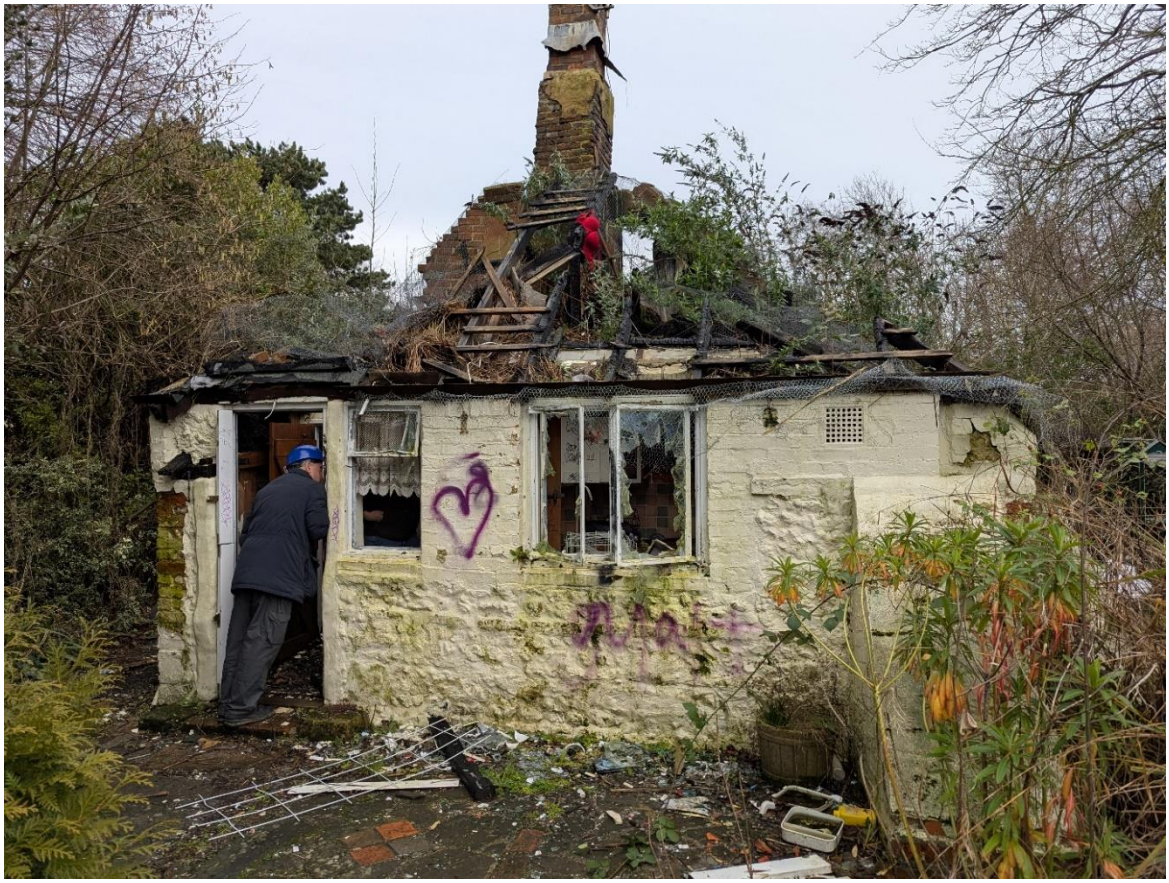

Photo 6 – External wall condition 3

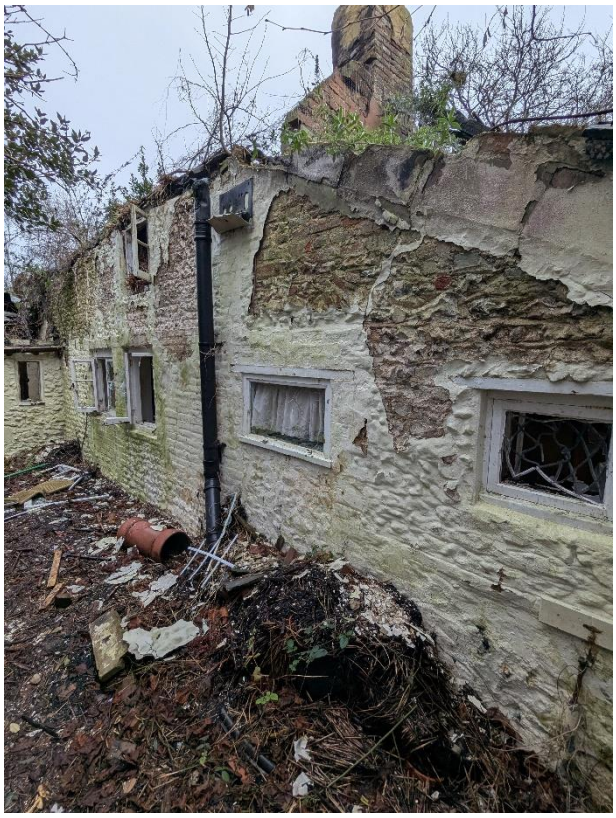

Photo 7 - External wall condition 4

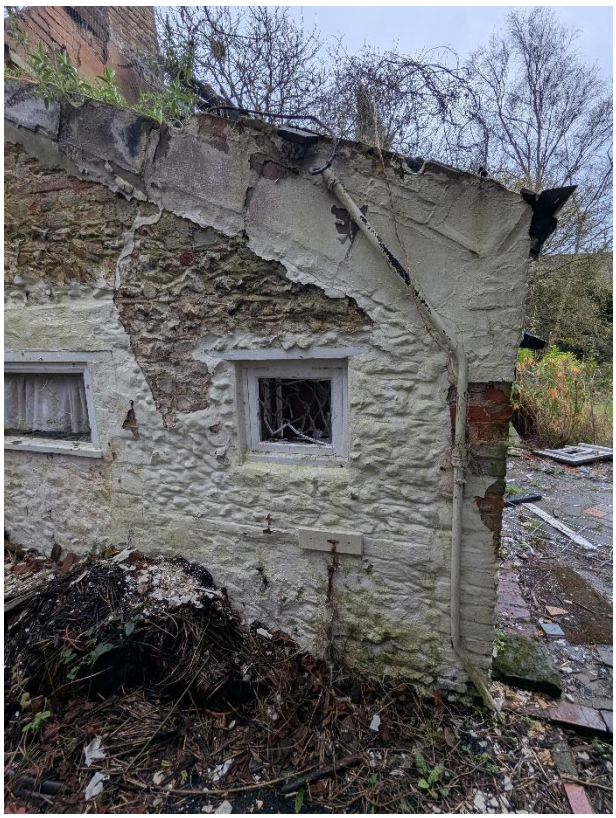

Photo 8 - External wall condition 5

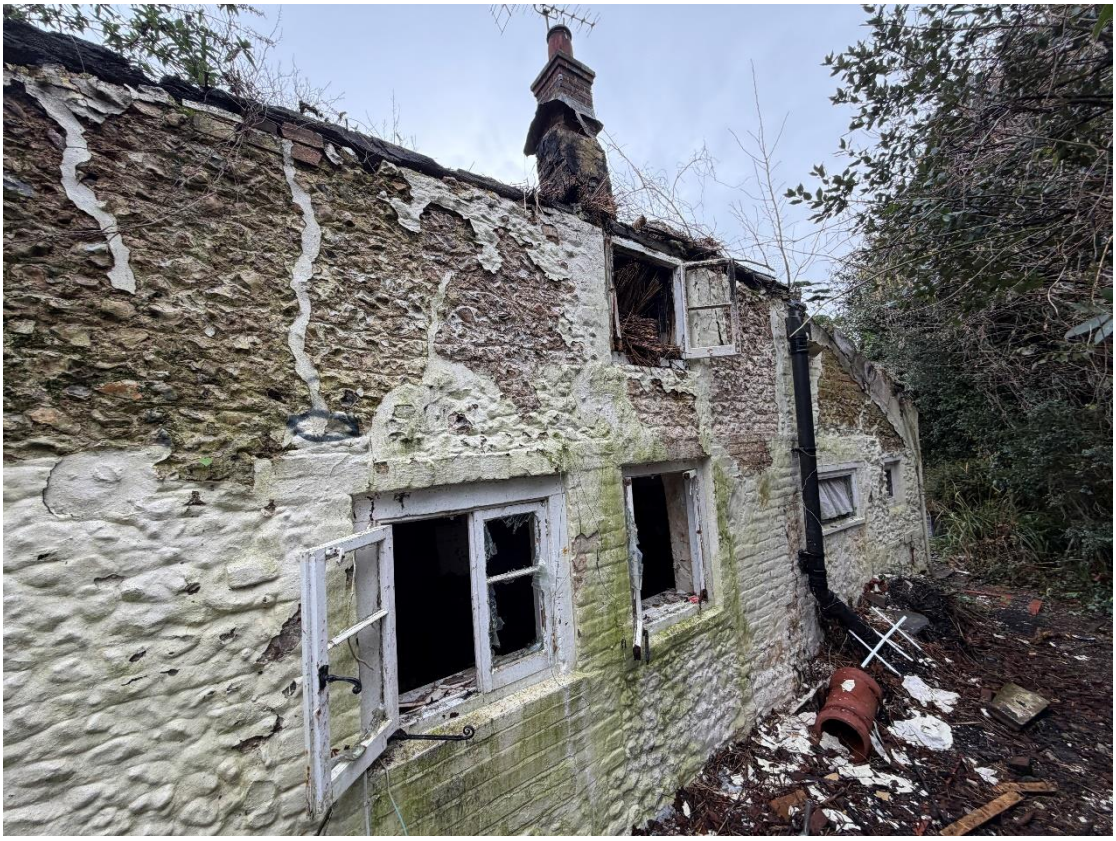

Photo 9 - External wall condition 6

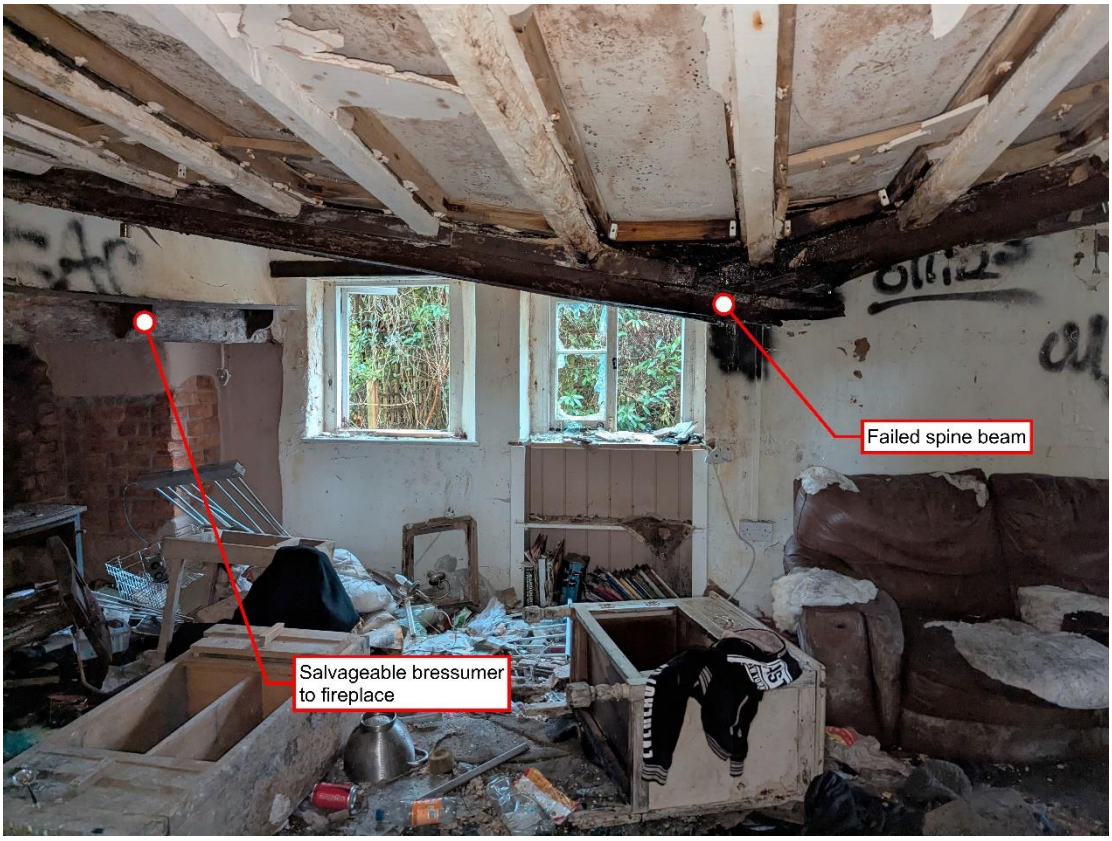

Photo 10 – Failed spine beam

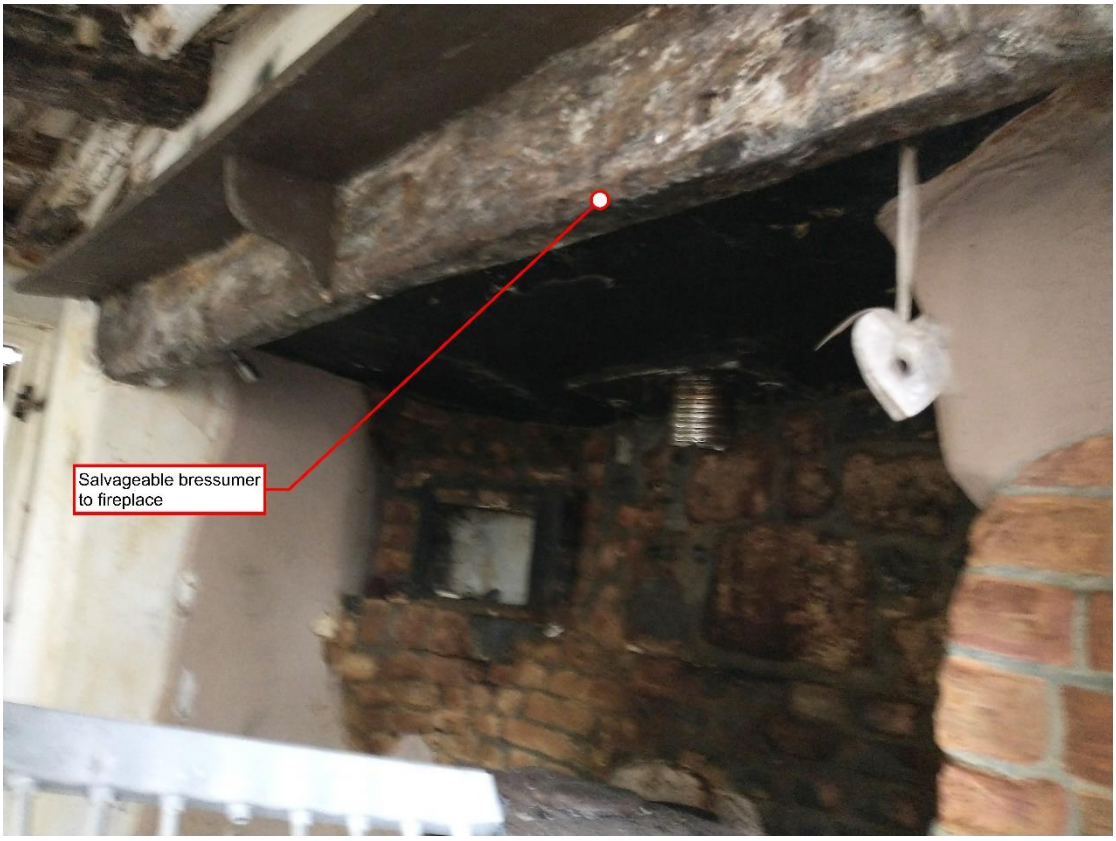

Photo 11 – Fireplace bressumer

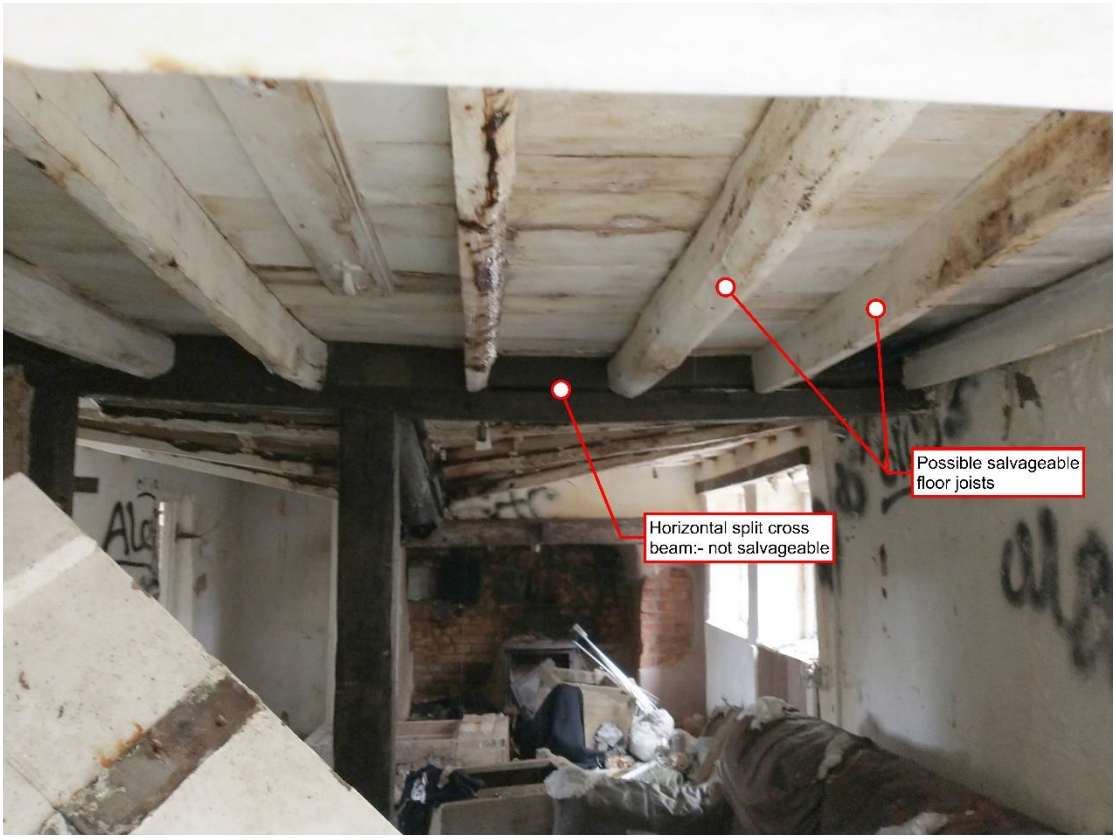

Photo 12 – Internal view 1

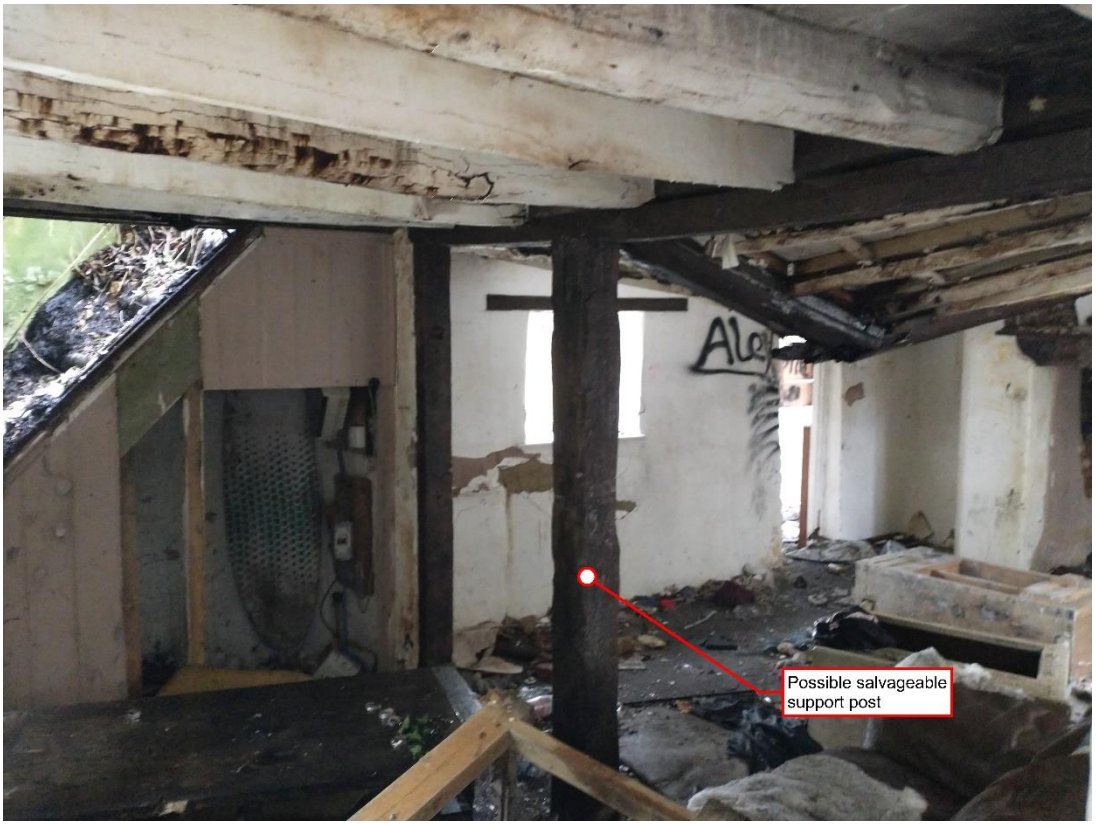

Photo 13 – Internal view 2

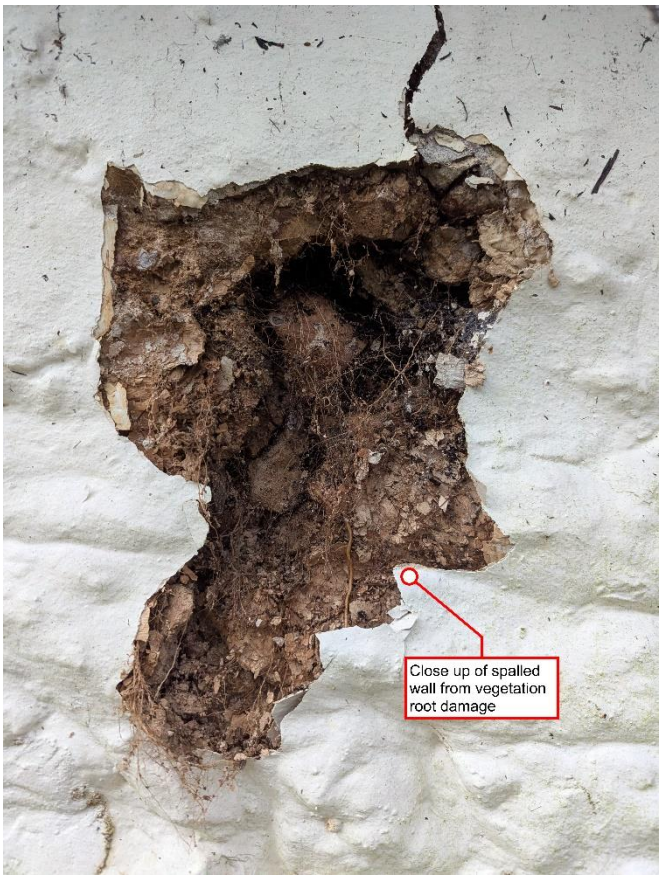

Photo 14 – Vegetation damage close-up

Photo 15 – Vegetation damage