



Report on Trumpington Meadows Build Quality Issues - A Barratt Homes Built Development, Cambridge

Following concerns raised by several home owners and residents of the Barratt built Trumpington Meadows development in Cambridge, I have been asked by Paul Colbert the Chairman of Trumpington Meadows Delivery & Action Group (TMDAG) to look into, research and investigate, various problems that have come to light recently with the roofs of certain properties on this new development.

I myself am a resident and homeowner on the development and am now retired. Although I am not a qualified surveyor, I spent the whole of my working life in the building trade as a plumber and for much of the time worked a great deal on roofs. I also managed my own business for over 35 years during which time I constructed a number of quality houses, one of which was tiled by my own plumbers. I have mentioned this as background in order to explain my ability and specific experience to comment on roofing matters.

There are apparently two main problems relating to defective workmanship and materials that are currently causing unnecessary stress and concern to property owners here on the development. That stress should however be unnecessary in so much as these are brand new houses that should be covered by both the NHBC and the developers (Barratt Homes) homes warranties.

SOLAR PANELS

The problems that are now surfacing and which are associated to the solar panel installation seems to be solely related to those installed after phase 4 by a specialist company named Ecolution whose office is London Road, Addington, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5SH. Some of their installations were carried out directly for Barratt and others for various roofing companies whose contracts with Barratt included the installation of the solar panels so they sub contracted this to Ecolution.



The banks of solar panels, the brand of which was specified by Barratt, were installed into a purpose made housing called "Easy Roof" after the roof was felt and battened but before any tiling commenced. This housing box is manufactured in France by a company named, confusingly, Evolution. Apparently part of this housing is an apron or sill flashing strip, the purpose of which is to weather the front of the panels. This flashing strip is made of a flexible material (not lead) synthetic, possibly a German product called Ubbink. I understand that it has an adhesive backing so that once the roof is tiled up to the panel, the sealing strip is removed and it can be dressed down onto the tile to weather the roof.

For some reason on certain roofs possibly due to the tiles being wet or damp or dusty, the adhesive failed to successfully stick to the tiles and as a result the flashing strip has lifted, possibly due to action of the wind and sun. Not only is this unsightly but there is also a risk of water ingress. At a rough count at present about 40 houses are affected.



I have noticed on some houses - possibly as many as 10 and mainly in the Kinsman Way area (phase 9) that there is no apron flashing at all. This is a mystery. I have discussed this with Mr David Priaux, Ecolution's senior commercial manager who tells me that their company were responsible for these panels and that the apron flashing strips were definitely in place for the roofing contractor to dress onto the slates. If this is true then either the roofer cut them off or they have been slated over the top in error. However in any case, they are missing but to make matters worse several slates appear to have only been fixed with a single nail and have come adrift laying at an angle looking likely to fall and could possibly cause serious injury.

DORMER WINDOWS and Chimneys

The problems related to the dormer windows again are on the large 3 storey properties that were constructed on later phases and at present, as far as I can observe to date, only certain houses are affected being located in the area around The Orchard including **XXXXXXXXXXXXX NUMBERS & ADDRESSES REDACTED XXXXXXXXXXXXX**. I think this is phase 5.

These dormer windows were manufactured in a factory, brought to site and then craned onto the roof. They are covered in a sheet metal that may be zinc or aluminium or alternately an alloy. Soon after the houses were bought, problems began to manifest themselves on some of the houses. The panels started to lift and in some cases even broke away. These houses were covered by the Barratt 5 year warranty deal so they carried out remedial work that involved the erection of full scaffolding to roof level. I am unsure what the repair work involved.

As time passed, the same problems developed on more houses and even recurred on those that had initially been repaired. Now that the 5 year warranty has expired, I am informed that both Barratt and the NHBC are refusing to deal with the matter. Barratt say that the dormer windows fitted to the houses built on the early phases were manufactured by a different company who have since ceased trading. They say that the second manufacturing company have also ceased trading and they insist they are now unable to source a company who are able to carry out the necessary repair work.

It is unclear why just a few houses are at present affected when there are many more at least 40, whose dormers are not. Perhaps, and this is only my thought, that the fact that I noticed some 6 years ago a group of these windows standing out in the open within the Barratt materials compound. During inclement weather during storage they may have been affected and the timber work under the zinc may have been warped or damaged in some way. If I am correct it may be these windows that are the same ones that have since failed.

I have noticed that some of the houses with affected dormers also have problems with the solar panel flashings. This is a further matter of concern. On some houses, the solar panels have been fitted very close to the rear of the dormers which is significant because any work carried out to the dormers may necessitate removal of some panels. A further problem has been raised concerning the window frames which may also have to be removed to allow the work to be properly completed. Additionally I am sorry to say that a further problem may be the condition of the timber panels under the present cladding which may also need attention.



I have also noticed that on several houses that the dummy chimneys that are clad with the same material are also beginning to peel in a similar fashion as the dormers. I have consulted Mr John Howard a professional surveyor regarding possible problems when marketing houses affected by these defects. He has confirmed the following. "In my opinion lender would make remedial work to the zinc cladding of the dormers an essential repair in granting a mortgage, and might make a retention of the likely cost if the proportion of loan to value is high" I have attached a copy of his report. *"Lifting of the flashing beneath the solar panels is most unlikely to affect a mortgage although it might be referred to the mortgage valuation report with a recommendation for repair."*



Conclusions and possible solutions

Solar Panels

I have consulted with Tanner and Hall Ltd of Harston, a local company who install solar panels and they have provided some budget costings to rectify the problems. These prices are intended as a guide only and are subject to a site survey and final confirmation. I attach a copy of their correspondence but to summarise the cost are.

2 storey houses £1,575.00

3 Storey houses £1,837.00

During our discussions, we did discuss the possibility of using a cherry picker platform lift but this was dismissed as being impracticable. The solar panels need to be removed for a successful lasting job to be carried out and this is not a possible task from a cherry picker platform.

Dormer Windows

It is generally agreed that the dormers where the metal has failed are beyond any sort of repair. Past efforts to repair the metal cladding have proved to be temporary fix and complete replacement is the only option for a lasting solution.

I have consulted with two companies - once again Tanner and Hall Ltd and ELC Roofing. These are two companies with considerable roofing experience and in the course of my investigations have provided me both with advice and also prepared budget quotations for the works considered necessary. Most of the houses affected are 3 storey although some have a dormer window above the garage. For the purpose of the costings I have based the figures on number 13 Piper Road which is a badly affected house.

I attach copies of the two quotes but to summarise the costs are:

Tanner and Halls quote (utilising sheet lead)

Single dormer £3,500

Two dormers £6,500

ELC quote (utilising sheet zinc)

Single dormer £4,617

Single dormer (utilising sheet lead) £3,400

These quotes are of course a for guidance only and are subject to qualifications

This report contains only factual information and I have not included any personal comments. I trust that it will prove to be useful document and background guidance for those sadly affected by these problems.

Robert Tyers

April 2021

UPDATE:

Since completing my report I have learned of the experience of the owner of a 3 storey house located on phase 6.

Completion of purchase was mid June 2015 with the benefit of Barratts's 5 year warranty. This warranty expired June 2020 but well before then, possible March 2020, the owner reported to Barratt that the flashing to the Solar Panels had failed. Barratt vaguely agreed that something would be done but nothing specific was agreed. However due to strong and constant persistence by the owner the matter was finally resolved during the final week of March (8 months after the warranty had expired) when without notice contractors arrived early one morning and erected a 3 lift scaffold to allow access to the panels.



A few days later another specialist contractor arrived, removed the panels and replaced the failed flashing with the product Wakaflex as mentioned in my report. It was a dry day so hopefully for all concerned the required adhesion was successful.

I managed to speak with the two operatives who explained that they were employed by a company located in Kidderminster called eco2solar. They also commented that their company were installing the Solar Panels for Barratt on the current phases 10-11.

Whether this action by Barratt sets a precedent is a question that should be addressed by those affected by the same problem.

.....

**Trumpington Meadows Delivery & Action Group
7 Greenway House, Otter Close, Cambridge
United Kingdom**



- * Pro-actively gathering information about problems on the development**
- * Reporting problems through the appropriate channels**
- * Robustly ensuring that they are resolved**