

Roof & Chimneys

The Basics



The roof of your property keeps the bad weather, such as rain and snow, out and it keeps the heat in. Roofs come in many shapes, sizes and designs, but regardless of their type, they have the important function of protecting the property from the weather. Because roofs are exposed to all weather, they are more vulnerable to damage.

To prevent water penetration it is very important roofs are kept in good condition at all times.

Getting a roof repaired

Repairing a roof or chimney can be expensive. This is because access can also be difficult. What might seem like a small and simple repair could cost more than you think or budget for.

If your Surveyor has identified any issues with the roof or chimney, but you may not think they sound serious, you should still get quotations from reputable roofing contractors. Then you will know what work needs to be done and the costs involved.



Different Roof Types

The timbers in a roof have an important function. They provide strength to the roof. No timbers should be cut or removed without specialist advice from a Structural Engineer. This is the same for most roof types.

Sloping Roofs

A sloping roof is any roof that slants more than 10 degrees. They are the most common type of roof in the UK. Older roofs were formed from rafters and purlins, known as the cut roof; these roof structures are built on-site from individual timbers. Since the 1960s it is more common for roofs to be made from prebuilt truss rafters, known as a trussed roof. Roof trusses are structural components to support the weight of roofs. These are made in a factory to the required specification and then brought to site. They are then lifted by a crane into the correct position.

Trussed Roof

Cut Roof



Different Roof Types

Roof Linings

Since the 1930s pitched roofs have been lined with felt. There is a common misunderstanding that the purpose of the felt is to provide a waterproof barrier; this is not the case as that is the job of the roof coverings.

Any protection against leaks is a secondary function of the felt. The main purpose of the felt is to help keep the building dry during the construction phase and to provide a barrier to stop wind-blown debris from going into the roof space.

Sometimes the felt under the roof can be damaged or torn over time. To replace the whole felt lining you would need to take the roof coverings off. It can be expensive to do this. Provided the external covering of the roof is maintained in good condition, the cost and disruption involved in replacing the felt may not be necessary until other parts of the roof cannot be fixed at a reasonable cost, and the roof requires recovering.

Sloping Roof Coverings

Pitched roofs are usually covered with either slate or tiles. Tiles are often made of clay or concrete. It is important to keep the external roof covering in good condition because it gives the roof the protection it needs from the weather.

Slipped and damaged slates/tiles can allow water to enter the property that can cause damage to other aspects. They can also be a health and safety risk; if they fall or get blown off the roof they can cause injury to people or damage to other property.

Over time some aspects of the roof coverings will become worn and will need to be replaced as part of usual maintenance. An example of this could be the mortar; this is the material used to set some tiles securely in place. Ridge tiles are the tiles situated at the top of the roof where the two sides of the roof meet and these are held in place with mortar. Another example is the mortar beneath the tiles at the edge of the roof.

Different Roof Types

Valleys and Box Gutters

Valley and box gutters are often required where different roofs or slopes meet. They are usually formed with materials such as lead or fibreglass, but they can also be formed with tiles. These gutters can be difficult to access and are sometimes completely out of sight.

These should be checked as part of any routine roof maintenance. They should be properly cleaned out and maintained. Doing this will prevent these parts from failing and, in turn, letting any water leak into the property.

Low Pitch Roofs

The pitch of a roof is the angle at which it is laid. Low pitch roofs, roofs with a very small slant, are more at risk to the weather; it is easier for wind and rain to get under these. A Surveyor will not know all the different tiles and slates and their specifications. That means they cannot say if the covering is the right type for your roof incline.

If the Surveyor lets you know there is a low pitched roof, it would be sensible for it to be inspected by a reputable roofing contractor. The reason for this is because although the roof may not be leaking when the inspection takes place, if it has not been laid to the correct specification it may leak under certain weather conditions.

Different Roof Types

Flat Roofs



A flat roof is any roof with a slant of 10 degrees or less. Flat roofs are traditionally formed in felt and will usually have a shorter life span compared to pitched roofs. They can deteriorate quickly and fail suddenly. If you do not fix small items of disrepair it can lead to costly problems. It is important to ensure a flat roof is kept in good condition at all times.

Legal advisers should check for any guarantees for flat roofs and that these can be transferred to you when you become the

new owner. If no guarantees are available then there is a risk that the roof may be of some age, or it may not have been laid correctly. If there are any problems with the roof you will have to pay the cost of any works necessary.

This could be expensive.

There have been improvements in roofing technology. There are more modern coverings, such as fibreglass or rubberised membranes and these can provide a longer life expectancy if they are laid properly.

Different Roof Types

Flat Roofs

Your surveyor will inspect a flat roof where it is possible to do so. However, in some situations it may not be possible, these situations would include:-

- If the flat roof is more than 3 metres above the ground
- If it is not safe to access it from a ladder
- If it cannot be seen from a window above

As part of your normal schedule of maintenance you should:-

- Make sure any roof chippings remain evenly laid
- If any cracked or bubbled areas are noticed to the covering then have these repaired immediately
- During winter months carefully remove any build-up of snow

You should have a professional inspection of your flat roof completed at least once every 3 years; this can often be a requirement of buildings insurers.

Building Regulations

Alterations to the roof structure where you are repairing or recovering more than 25% of a roof require Building Regulation Approval. If there have been changes made to the roof structure, or significant repairs have been undertaken, legal advisors should check to make sure the appropriate permission and certificates exist and that they are available.

If the works were undertaken without the appropriate permissions then there is a risk the works may not be to the standard required. This may result in costly repairs and alterations being required.

Chimneys



Chimneys are found on most homes built before the mid-1960s. Increasingly they are found in more modern homes too. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are built from various materials, although most commonly they are built in either brick or stone. Some modern properties have fibreglass chimneys installed. These are purely for decorative purposes; designed to make the house look traditional or more appealing. To stop rainwater from going into the roof, the junctions between the base of

the chimney and the roof coverings need to be sealed with either a flashing (most commonly metal) or a cement fillet.

Like roofs, chimneys are exposed to the weather, and over time parts of the chimney structure, such as the brickwork, pointing (mortar), and waterproof junctions (flashings and soakers), will become worn. It may need repair or replacement as part of your routine maintenance. As part of your schedule of maintenance you should:

- Keep chimney pots in good order and ensure they are securely joined to the top of the chimney
- Keep the brickwork and mortar joints in good condition. If you notice any cracking of the brickwork have it repaired
- If television aerials or satellite dishes are attached to the chimney ensure they are properly secured

If a chimney is not properly maintained it can allow water penetration and cause damage to the fabric of the building.