

PMM/grw

15 May 2006

Battle
Sussex TN33 0NF

Dear Mr & Mrs

Re: Canon Street, Winchester

Further to my brief visit to this house on Friday, and our subsequent meeting at our office, generally this house was reasonably well modernised albeit some time ago. The details of the property are as the agents particulars. The intention is to give limited observations to suggest areas of expenditure and review the possible market value.

It is a period house on three floors plus a cellar to the rear half. It is set in a planning conservation area. While it was built as a semi-detached house the lower neighbour on the right (east) is now attached. The building has solid brick walls under a plain tile roof with one front tiled original dormer and a wider flat roofed rear added dormer. It may date from the early 1800s.

Inevitably insulation levels are poor (given modern requirements). In the roof, obsolete tanks remain because a recently fitted gas-fired combination boiler has been added. This runs on a direct water main with a new polythene feed and stop-tap seen in the cellar.

Generally the electrical installation appears to be too old to upgrade. Further advice might be taken from a qualified electrical contractor. A mains smoke detector system is advised.

The open-plan nature of the accommodation now falls short of modern best practice in terms of protected means of escape. Depending how you intend to occupy the property, I would suggest that the sitting room may need to be compartmented from the hall corridor by double doors, enlarging the non-load bearing stud partition (reducing the opening width).

Of greater importance is the provision of an appropriate door, at the bottom of the stairs, separating the kitchen from the latter. Equally, the first floor open-plan landing to the attic bedroom should ideally have a separation with a door at the bottom of the stairs. The bathroom layout might be retained (as an en-suite) or with repositioning a new door off the study area landing would retain direct access to here.

The old walls are of solid traditional 9" brickwork, probably built without a damp proof course. There is some weathering to the pointing, particularly on the east that is, above the neighbour's roof on the lower side. Further attention will be needed. Under some circumstances, driving rain penetration may develop.

On the south wall, both the bedroom and sitting room have old dry linings in traditional construction. This disguises any risk of damp penetration and rising damp. Fortunately, the ground level is well below this and reasonable ventilation has been introduced, below the sitting room timber floor, ducted through to the cellar. This will reduce the risk of decay from damp. Currently there are readings in the plasters adjacent to the sink that is, on the rear wall. This is alongside a modern block pier, which is plastered and may have a damp proof course. The rear wall damp is likely to need future attention with kitchen refitting.

The size of the kitchen was increased by the introduction of a steel beam to carry the major west chimney breast (in the study over) with a pair of piers at either end. There is no sign of distress.

The polycarbonate roofed timber and glazed conservatory outbuilding has no opening vents. There is rot in the French doors. Concealed within this is the soil pipe that is, the waste drainage from the first floor bathroom. Interestingly this extends up around on the east party wall to pick up the waste from the wash basin on the top floor. There is a possibility this might be adapted for a top floor shower room or WC subject to further advice from a qualified contractor. The manhole chamber in the solid floor of the conservatory is screwed down and was not opened. There is a possibility that the drains flow across the back of the house. This would make it difficult to form a new excavated window opening to the cellar, although this could be considered for the future.

Issues of downward heat loss from the kitchen floor into the cellar will arise. There is inevitably a degree of damp in the subterranean structure. Better ventilation of the cellar to the north side is advised to assist reducing the impact of this. ['Water is the enemy: Air is the friend.']

Alongside the chimney breast remaining in the cellar there is an old flue pipe buried in masonry, which is of age where asbestos could be present. It is suggested this is encapsulated with a mortar render.

Although a new boiler has been fitted, this links to older central heating radiators. Some future upgrading may prove to be necessary.

Among the repairs apparent are timber nosings to the staircase rising to the first floor. It is likely the old timber here and elsewhere has been chemically treated against beetle infestation. This was not identified. The old timber windows have been overhauled in the past but are not fully draft-proof.

Inward deflection of the original roof timbering can be identified: the south roof slope is particularly distorted, but this all appears to longstanding. At the foot of the south roof slope a form of boxed gutter valley is present in traditional lead with a downpipe at the south east corner. The access to view this is limited. A more conventional gutter system is present to the rear with the downpipe in the neighbour's party wall.

A full building survey or Homebuyer report will probably identify additional matters but generally it would appear that the guide price is realistic although it is hoped, given the expenditure identified within this limited assessment, that a more modest negotiated figure can be agreed. I would suggest that this might be nearer £##. This is on the usual vacant possession for the freehold without restrictive covenant basis.

The cost of preparing a full building survey on this property would normally amount to i.e. [£700.00 plus VAT, allowing for the enclosed invoice, this could be undertaken for £620.00 plus VAT].

The cost of preparing a Homebuyer report on this property would normally amount to i.e. [£500.00 plus VAT, allowing for the enclosed invoice, this could be undertaken for £420.00 plus VAT].

The inspection carried out has been a limited walk-through assessment only; no services have been tested and no opening up carried out.

I hope you are successful with your negotiations.

Yours sincerely

P M Morton MRICS MCMI
Chartered Building Surveyor
For A E J P Surveyors Ltd