BUILDING SURVEY

42 XXXXX STREET, NORTHAMPTON, NNX XXX

General view of the property

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SUMMARY

Property address – 42 XXXXX Street, Northampton, NNX XXX

Description – Two-storey, solid-brick built, mid terrace house with small cellar and attic conversion providing additional bedroom in roof space. External walls of the property have been rendered since construction.

Year of Construction – c.1900

Accommodation –

Cellar – Storage area unsuitable for use as living accommodation.

Ground-floor - Entrance hall leading to the main staircase, living room, kitchen and shower room.

First-floor – Two bedrooms, landing, dressing-room (with possible but rather unsatisfactory use as an additional child's bedroom) and bathroom.

Second-floor – One bedroom.

External Facilities – The property fronts directly onto the pavement. There is a small paved yard/garden to the rear.

Tenure – We understand that the property is being sold on a Freehold basis with vacant possession. We have not made any enquiries to confirm this.

External Floor Area – 108m2 (Excluding cellar)

Reinstatement Cost (based on ABI/RICS BCIS tables) - £145,000 including demolition, site clearance, reconstruction and professional fees.

BRIEF OVERALL ASSESSMENT

This traditional, solid-brick built house was constructed c.1900. The external walls have subsequently been rendered and painted, a single living room has been created by the demolition of a wall separating the original two reception rooms and the roof-space has been converted to form an additional bedroom. The property is suffering minor damp penetration through the main roof, localised rising damp and penetrating damp into the basement.

SERIOUS DEFECTS – Works to be undertaken before the property is occupied

Restore the integrity of the fire-proofing to the attic bedroom. This assumes that the original fire-proofing works were undertaken to approved standards and do not require to be upgraded.

Guideline budget cost £2,000

ESSENTIAL REPAIRS – To be undertaken at an early date to prevent deterioration occurring

Take down and repair top of chimney, repair or replace fillets at edge of main roof slopes and re-point and possibly re-bed copings and ridge tiles.

Guideline budget cost £4,000 (including access) assuming works undertaken concurrently.

OTHER REPAIRS – To be undertaken at some time to prevent longer-term deterioration

1. Remove plaster-board from walls of cellar and treat locally for any rot.
2. Cut back paving in rear yard, reduce levels and restore ventilation to floor.
3. Localised damp-proofing to walls and repair of plaster etc.

Guideline budget cost £4,000

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

None - Other than testing of services if considered appropriate as a precaution.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

The property stands on a site that slopes very slightly down from right to left. There are no trees within influencing distance.

We have no reason to believe the property to be at significant risk of flooding.

MATTERS FOR YOUR SOLICITOR

Your solicitors should carry out enquiries into the following matters prior to exchange of contracts.

1. Investigate the title deeds to ensure that there are no onerous covenants.
2. Obtain a local search from the local authority.
3. Obtain an environmental report.

Planning – No enquiries have been made to the local authority regarding Planning matters. Your solicitor should advise you in this respect.

Building Regulations - No enquiries have been made to the local authority regarding Building Regulation matters. Your solicitor should advise you in this respect.

Roads - No enquiries have been made to the local authority regarding roads serving the property. Your solicitor should advise you in this respect.

Rights of Way - No enquiries have been made regarding rights of way. Your solicitor should advise you in this respect.

Signed

Robert Beech TD BSc MRICS

INSTRUCTION

Client – Mr X, 28 XXXXXX Place, Northampton, NNX XXX.

Date and Means of Instruction – 19/07/2013 – verbal instruction by telephone to inspect and report on any significant defects particularly those that might adversely affect sale of the property in the future.

Date of Inspection – 20/07/2013

Weather at Time of Inspection – Hot, sunny and dry following a period of several weeks of dry weather.

Furnished/Unfurnished – At the time of the inspection the property was un-furnished.

Occupancy – We understand that the property was in single occupancy and at the time of inspection we saw no indications of formal or informal tenancy arrangements or indications of recent or ongoing occupation.

Directions – All directions referred to in the report are taken as if standing in front of the property looking towards the front elevation

Date of report – 22/07/2013

SURVEY REPORT

EXTERIOR

CHIMNEY STACK

There is a chimney stack to the right-hand side of the roof over the main front section of the building. This is shared with the right-hand adjoining property and appears to be redundant. The chimney has been capped-off but there is no indication of ventilation having been provided. Lack of ventilation could lead to dampness within the flue.

The top four or five course of brick-work have deteriorated as a result of damp, frost action and long exposure and will need to be rebuilt at some point in the next few years. The chimney does not appear to be unstable at present. Any reconstruction should include ventilation to the flue.

There is a buddleia or similar plant growing out of the rear of the chimney. Roots from this plant could loosen brickwork and it should be removed immediately. The flashings around the chimney are lead and, as far as could be seen from ground-level and from the front roof-light appear to be in good condition.

We expect that there was originally a chimney serving the kitchen at the rear. This has been removed for its full height and the chimney above roof level has been demolished - probably when the roof coverings were renewed.

MAIN ROOF

The main roof over the front section of the building and the rear projection is pitched and would originally have been covered in Welsh slate. The original coverings clearly deteriorated (probably as a result of the rusting of the slating nails) and have been replaced using interlocking concrete tiles. This work was probably undertaken within the last thirty years. Replacement tiles are very considerably heavier than slates and can cause overloading of the roof-structure leading to deflection of timbers or spreading of the roof. We could not inspect the roof structure due to lack of access but we noted none of the symptoms of overloading and the line of the roofs appeared to be good with no indication of sagging or spreading. We would expect signs of any overloading to have manifested themselves before now.

The party walls between adjoining properties project through the roof-coverings (this was a fire-protection regulation at the time of construction). The party-walls are capped by blue-brick copings. The pointing to these copings is in a somewhat deteriorated condition and could allow rainwater to soak into the underlying brickwork.

The edges of tiled roof over the front part of the building are weathered with cement fillets against the party walls. These inevitably crack as a result of thermal movement. The fillets, where seen, had cracked and loosened and this is probably the cause of dampness seen along the right-hand edge of the ceiling in the attic bedroom. The fillets should be replaced ideally with lead flashings which will not deteriorate as rapidly.

The pointing to ridge-tiles to the front roof is slightly deteriorated and should be replaced. The tiles may also need to be re-bedded. The ridge to the roof over the rear projection could not be seen but may well be in similar condition. We suggest that repairs to the chimney, copings, fillets and ridges are undertaken together to minimise access costs.

The flashings at the abutment of the rear roof and rear wall of the main house and the valley gutter between the roofs could not be seen.

There is no access hatch to the roof over the rear projection and the ceiling/soffits in the attic bedroom conceal the roof timbers. We cannot therefore confirm whether there is adequate insulation or whether the timbers are suffering from insect infestation (woodworm etc.). However, as mentioned previously there is no indication of distortion or deformation of ceilings roof coverings etc. to suggest a major defect.

It would have been normal practice to lay sarking-felt beneath the roof tiles when they were laid but we cannot, of course, confirm that this was the case.

RAIN-WATER GOODS (Gutters rain-water pipes etc.)

The gutters and rainwater pipes are of modern plastic and probably replaced the original iron when the roof was recovered. They appear to be in good condition but were not tested for water-tightness. No blockage or growth of vegetation in the gutters was noted.

The rainwater pipe at the rear will connect into a combined drainage system.

The rainwater pipe at the front serves several properties and discharges into a cast iron channel designed to carry water to the street. This channel is completely blocked and water will be overflowing and running into the ground against the front wall of the house. The gully should be cleaned and overhauled to prevent this.

EAVES FASCIAS & SOFFITS

These could only be inspected from ground-level. No significant deterioration was noted and decoration appeared to be in reasonable condition.

MAIN WALLS

The main walls are of 225mm solid brick construction but have been rendered and painted since original construction. The rendering was presumably intended to overcome penetrating dampness through the solid brickwork. Rendering can be effective in this respect but tends to trap any dampness in the structure and to force it to permeate towards the interior and to evaporate into the building.

The walls are plumb with no indication of bowing or distortion and nothing to suggest significant initial settlement or ongoing foundation movement or other serious structural inadequacy. The doors and window openings remain square and this reinforces the view that no major movements have occurred in the property.

There is slight and generalised crazing of the render to all walls. This will have resulted from thermal movements in the walls and is a very common defect in rendered surfaces. It is not considered significant and the render appears to be solid and in good general condition. The painted surface of the render will necessitate regular maintenance and redecoration over the life of the building.

The house as built would have been provided with a blue-brick or slate damp-proof course. This would have ineffective and is likely to have deteriorated over time. There is evidence (regular drilled holes at low-level) to suggest that a chemical damp-proof course has been installed in the rear wall of the main structure and side and rear walls of the rear projection. This would have been common practice during modernisation and refurbishment to enhance the damp-proofing of the walls. This method is reasonably but not entirely effective but is the

only practicable method of upgrading the damp-proofing of such walls. Enquiries should be made to establish the extent of these works (did they for instance include internal walls?) and whether a guarantee exists. The painting of the low-level plinth on the front wall perhaps conceals evidence of injection to this wall.

Readings were taken at regular intervals using a damp meter. Generally damp-levels were within acceptable limits apart from at the front left-hand corner of the living room and rear wall of the shower-room where damp levels were sufficient to lead to gradual deterioration of timber and plaster.

The main walls of the cellar are very damp as would be expected in brickwork built below ground level. It would be extremely difficult and costly to water-proof the cellar and works would involve “tanking” the walls. The walls are currently lined in plasterboard on timber battens in an attempt to mask the problem. We suspect that the timbers may well be suffering from rot and close attention should be regularly paid to ensure that any fungal infestation does not spread to the structural timbers of the house. This superficial damp-proofing is largely ineffective with damp soaking into and causing deterioration to the plasterboards. It must be recognised that the cellar will never form a suitable habitable room and it might be better to remove the panelling and battens from the walls to prevent the danger of the development of a severe fungal infestation and the risk of this spreading to other parts of the building.

French windows have been installed in the rear wall of the living room. It is unclear whether the installation necessitated any widening or raising of the existing window opening and, if so whether new lintels were installed to support brickwork over the opening (the rendered walls obscure the underlying structure). However there is no indication of deflection or other defects over the opening.

It would seem that the original two reception rooms have been opened up to form one large living room. A lintel or rolled steel joist would have been necessary to support brickwork over the opening (the plastered walls obscure the underlying structure). However there is no indication of deflection of other defects over the opening. The work does not appear to be recent and we would have expect any defects resulting from inadequacies in the work to have manifested themselves before now. You may wish to instruct your solicitor to make enquiries and to obtain copies of drawings and Building Regulation completion notices if these are available.

There is a large growth of ivy on the rear left-hand corner of the rear projection. This appears to be rooted in the neighbouring garden. The ivy has been severed close to ground-level and the roots appear to have been killed. Removal of the ivy adhering to the walls will almost certainly damage the painted surface and might disturb the render.

SUB-FLOOR VENTILATION

The ground-floors in the rear projection appear to be modern concrete and require no ventilation.

The suspended timber floor to the main section of the building is provided with two vents in the front wall. Proper ventilation can only be achieved by a through-flow of air. There are no vents apparent in the rear wall and we note that the solid concrete paving against the rear wall is at high-level. This paving may cover and obstruct vents in the wall. Ideally this paving should be cut back and ground-level reduced close to the wall to expose any vents. We also

suggest that the high level of the paving may in itself be causing dampness against the ends of the floor-joists.

WALL INSULATION

None – The walls are solid and levels of insulation will be poor. The only methods of improving insulation (if required) would be the lining of the walls internally with insulated plaster-board or the fitting of insulation overlaid with render externally. Both would prove expensive and disruptive.

WINDOWS

The original timber windows have been replaced recently with PVCu casement windows of modern design with a suitable gap between the panes of the double-glazed units. The window-frames all appear to be in good condition and there was no indication of deterioration of the units and resultant misting within the voids.

The window-frames are fitted with lockable latches (keys stored in the kitchen).

There should be FENSA certificates available to confirm that the installation conformed to regulations current at the time.

The attic bedroom is fitted with a “Velux” (or similar) roof-light. This is not fitted with a suitable stay to fix it in an open position. The sealant around the opening-light is slightly damaged.

EXTERNAL DOORS

Front Door – This is a panelled timber door with as small viewing panel. It is in good condition and fitted with a five lever mortise dead-lock.

French Windows – These are fully glazed in small panes. There is softness to the timber indicating slight rot in the bottom rails. Localised repair and redecoration is required to prevent deterioration.

Kitchen Door – This is a glazed soft-wood door with a hard-wood threshold. There is some slight deterioration to the bottom (plywood) panel. Localised repair and redecoration is required to prevent deterioration.

EXTERIOR DECORATIONS

The rendered walls have been referred to previously. The painted surface is currently in reasonable condition but will require regular painting in future.

All external joinery would benefit from redecoration but the two doors referred to above should be decorated soon to prevent deterioration.

EXTERNAL FEATURES

There is no garage or other external buildings. The property fronts directly onto the pavement.

The rear yard/garden is generally paved with an area of gravel. There is brick edging to some of the paving and this is a potential trip hazard. The paving itself is in reasonable condition although the height of concrete against the house is a concern as mentioned earlier.

The rear boundary of the property is formed by the wall of a three-storey factory converted to residential use.

The right-hand boundary is a brick wall of varying height. The brickwork is in a slightly deteriorated condition but the wall is plumb and relatively sound.

The left-hand boundary is a brick wall of varying height. The brickwork is in a slightly deteriorated condition but the wall is plumb and relatively sound. There is no coping to a section of this wall. This may lead to water saturation and deterioration over time.

There are no trees or significant vegetation within influencing distance of the property. The sub-soil is likely to be shrinkable clay but there is no current threat of clay shrinkage caused by tree-roots.

INTERIOR

ROOF CONSTRUCTION

There was no access to examine any of the roof structure. It is probable that the roof will be constructed of a series of soft-wood rafters supported, at mid-point, by purlins spanning from the main walls. The new roof coverings will have significantly increased the loading on the timbers. We cannot confirm whether the roofs were strengthened to support these loads but we saw no evidence to suggest that the roof is deflecting or distorting as a result of the weight of the tiles.

Old roof timbers are susceptible to beetle infestation (wood-worm). We cannot confirm that wood-worm is not present or whether any treatments have been undertaken in the past. Infestation needs to be extensive and severe to lead to significant loss of strength. There is no evidence of weakening of the structure.

You may wish to enquire whether timber treatment has been undertaken in the past and if so to obtain copies of specifications and guarantees relating to the work.

We cannot confirm the presence or adequacy of any roof insulation as there was no access to inspect.

WALLS, PARTITIONS AND PLASTERWORK

The party-walls between the adjoining properties are plumb and in good condition. Plasterwork is generally sound and in good condition other than in areas of rising damp (referred to earlier) and in the attic room (discussed later). The client has raised a question regarding support to the internal chimney/fireplaces following removal of the fireplace in the living room. We were unable to see whether proper support has been provided to the higher level brickwork but the chimney will have been bonded into the party-wall during construction, does not project far beyond the face of the party-wall and there is no indication that it is not adequately supported by and connected to the brickwork of this wall.

FIRE-PLACES, FLUES ETC.

Fire-places in the property have been removed and the flues blocked. There is ventilation to the flue in the living room but this should be supplemented by ventilation of the chimney stack to provide a through-flow of air. There is a potential otherwise for deliquescent salts condensed into the flue to attract dampness which could soak through the brickwork to stain and damage internal surfaces. There is no evidence currently that this is occurring.

FLOORS

The ground floors in the rear projection appear to be concrete and these should have been laid on a polythene damp-proof membrane. The tiled surfaces are sound and level and showed no signs of rising damp where tested.

The floor in the living room is suspended timber with an exposed tongue and grooved board surface. We have raised concerns regarding rising damp at the front corner of the living room and about the high level paving in the rear yard. We could not examine the structure of the floor but the floor was level, was not unduly springy and showed no movement. There is therefore no reason to believe that it is currently suffering from significant deterioration.

Upper floors are suspended timber. They are level and no defects were apparent.

DOOR OPENINGS

These were square and doors fitted well and operated correctly. There was no indication of distortion to the door openings that might suggest movement of the structure.

STAIRCASES

The two timber staircases appeared to be level, sound and of sufficient strength. We are concerned that the collapse of the plasterboard lining under the staircase to the attic may have compromised the integrity of its fire protection. This needs to be investigated as a matter of urgency. We have referred to the attic room separately later in this report.

The staircase to the cellar is uneven with varying widths of tread and heights of risers. The staircase is sound but this unevenness presents a potential hazard of trips and falls.

KITCHEN AND BATHROOM FITTINGS

It is beyond the scope of this report to comment in detail on these matters. Suffice it to say that all are modern and appear adequate and in good condition.

INTERIOR DECORATIONS

These are basic but in good condition with the exception of the cellar and attic referred to separately later.

ATTIC

The roof space has been converted to form an additional bedroom. This work would have required Building Regulations approval. The structural work appears to be of a reasonable standard and the need to provide fire protection has been recognised by the provision of a fire-resisting door with a self-closure device. For the safety of occupants we would advise most strongly that you check that Building Regulation was obtained and that this included suitable fire protection to the room. We suspect that the collapse of the plaster-boarding under the staircase will in any event have compromised any fire protection and that this should be restored in a manner that will reduce the risk of future damage. Work to do so would probably necessitate access through, and damage to, the wardrobe in the bedroom below.

We would also recommend that you check that planning permission was granted for the alteration. If, for any reason, the room became unusable as a bedroom it would effectively

reduce the house from a three to a two-bedroom property. This is likely to impact significantly on market value.

The walls and soffits in the attic room have been roughly boarded and the boards have not been taped or skimmed. A rough covering of Artex or similar textured material has been applied. Older Artex finishes contain asbestos. This is not a hazard whilst encapsulated and undisturbed but is hazardous if drilled, sanded or otherwise disturbed. Disposal of asbestos contaminated Artex should be made to a licensed tip by suitably trained contractors. Proper disposal is an expensive business. We noted that Artex covered plasterboard along the right-hand edge of the soffit has suffered damage from water penetration.

CELLAR

The walls of the cellar are inherently damp as the walls are below ground level and, in many places, in direct contact with earth. It would be difficult and costly to overcome this dampness and a system of tanking would be necessary to be effective. The ceiling height is low, there is insufficient ventilation and natural light and access by staircase is poor. It must be recognised that the room will never be suitable for habitation and that it is probably only suitable for storage of items that are not susceptible to damp.

The attempts made to overcome dampness by lining the walls with plasterboard are not effective and damp is penetrating the boarded surfaces in several places. The boarding is thought to be fixed to timber battens and if this is the case there is a real risk that wet-rot or, in the worst case, dry-rot could become established in these timbers and then spread to other parts of the house. We could not confirm during our inspection whether the battens were rotten but damp conditions were conducive to fungal attack. We would recommend that the panelling and battens are removed to minimise the risk of a fungal infestation developing unseen behind the boards or to allow any existing infestation to be eradicated.

SERVICES

IMPORTANT NOTE – Only detailed specialist tests will confirm the adequacy, efficiency and/or safety of services installations. Surveyors are not qualified to undertake these tests. Any comments on services in this report are made by way of general observation of visible items only. We have however drawn attention to any matters which give us cause for concern. We recommend that you arrange for the services to be inspected by specialists.

DRAINAGE

The property appears to be connected to the mains drainage system via a manhole in the rear yard. The cover was screwed down and could not be lifted. The drains, unless replaced recently will comprise rigidly jointed glazed pipework. This is susceptible to breakage in the event of ground movement and leakage from drains is a common cause of subsidence in buildings of this type. We have no reason to suspect significant damage and the nearby gully looked to be in good condition.

A soil and vent pipe, in modern plastic, with a connection from the shower room serves the bathroom. The condition of the underground drainage could only be confirmed by a specialist inspection using CCTV camera equipment.

All above ground pipework appeared to be properly connected and in good condition.

COLD WATER

The cold water supply enters the property through the front wall of the cellar close to the gas meter. A stop-tap is fitted close to the entry point. The incoming service pipe appears to be iron and as such will old but probably not original.

Water pressure at the kitchen tap was good. No tests for contamination or purity were undertaken.

GAS

The property is connected to mains gas which enters the property via a meter on the front wall of the cellar. Gas was connected and flowing to the boiler at the time of our inspection.

ELECTRICITY

The electricity supply enters the property at the front right-hand corner of the cellar. Electricity is distributed to the various circuits via a modern distribution board fitted with circuit breakers.

Wiring, **where seen** was run in PVC insulated cable. Provision of power sockets is considered adequate in all rooms.

To ensure that the installation meets current standards it would be necessary to instruct an NICEIC inspection by a suitably qualified electrician.

HOT WATER

Domestic hot water is provided directly from a gas-fired Worcester combination boiler. This appeared to be relatively new and was vented directly via a flue in the wall of the kitchen. There is no storage of hot water and the cylinder has been removed from the cupboard on the first-floor landing. We ran water in the sink and bathroom and can confirm that the boiler operated and that the flow of hot water was adequate.

An installation certificate may be obtainable from the previous owner. Any testing of the gas supply and appliances, as required if the property is to be let, should be undertaken by a “Gas- Safe” registered contractor.

HEATING

Gas-fired central heating to conventional water-filled radiators (including one in the cellar) is provided by the same Worcester combination boiler.

The heating was not on when we visited but we noted that the radiators are relatively modern and appeared adequate in size and number to heat the house. The heating is controlled from entrance hall.

STRUCTURAL RISKS

SUBSIDENCE

Sub-soil in the general area is thought to include shrinkable clay. This is susceptible to changes in volume due to desiccation during periods of prolonged dry weather especially where trees or vegetation is in close proximity. There is no indication that the property has suffered from subsidence in the past and there are no trees currently within influencing distance. The depth of the foundation at the front of the property will give further protection to this part of the house.

DAMPNESS

Reference has been in the body of the report to the apparent installation of a silcone injection damp-proof course. This is not entirely effective and this, combined with high paving levels at the rear could lead to deterioration of timber and plaster. The cellar is extremely damp and reference should be made to our specific comments on this room.

TIMBER DEFECTS

None have been positively identified because of restricted access. There is a potential for deterioration to occur as a result of dampness. A building of this age may well suffer from beetle infestation. There is no indication of significant weakening of structural timbers as a result.

STATUTORY & OTHER RISKS

PLANNING & BUILDING REGULATIONS

Various works have been undertaken within recent years to alter and modernise and extend the property. It would be advisable for your solicitor to obtain copies of Building Regulation consents and completion notices in respect of works to open up the living room and, of especial concern, the conversion of the attic to form a bedroom.

PARTY WALL ETC. ACT 1996

Since 1997 it has been a requirement for building owners undertaking works to party walls (and certain works involving excavation close to neighbouring properties) to serve notice under the Act. There was no evidence of any works having been undertaken since 1997 that would have required service of such a notice.

ROADS

The road to the front of the property appears to be a public street with no direct responsibility for maintenance falling on adjoining property owners.

RIGHTS OF WAY

There was no evidence during our inspection that any rights of way exist over the property.

Signed

Robert Beech TD BSc MRICS