

The Coach House (Location)



BUILDING SURVEY

Prepared by John Gammon

July 2009

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 *Scope of instructions*

The scope of this pre-acquisition survey is limited to the accessible areas of the building internally, the external areas and the 2 garages included with the prospective purchase.

The report should read with reference to the Terms and Conditions of Engagement within which the inspection and report are to be undertaken, and a copy of these are provided as an appendix to the report.

This report is for the private and confidential use of Mr C -----, for whom the report is undertaken and should not be reproduced in whole or part or relied upon by third parties for any use without the express written authority of the surveyors, Oxton Property Consultants Ltd.

1.2 *Property address*

The Coach House, -----

1.3 *Client's name and address*

Mr -----

1.4 *Date of survey*

Tuesday 2 July 2009, arrival at 10-30am.

1.5 *Weather*

Cold and overcast with light rain

1.6 *Limitations of inspection*

The property was fully furnished and contained the owner's personal effects, however this did not obstruct the survey. Access was granted to each room and the two garages.

There were no floor coverings evident as the floorboards had been sanded and finished. It was not possible to inspect beneath the floor boards, and there were no findings during the survey that would make this a requirement.

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Inspection of the north east elevation was limited as inspection is only possible from the rear garden of the adjacent property, to which there was no access. Partial inspection was possible from the grounds of the adjacent property to the rear.

There was no invasive inspection to any part of the building fabric.

These limitations are additional to any imposed in the conditions of engagement and are a consequence of both the building and the circumstances of the inspection.

1.7 Information relied upon in this report

From discussions with the existing owner occupiers, several areas of information were noted;

- The property was originally a masonry cottage that has been extended to form the coach house.
- There have been numerous works during their ownership of the property (c. 6 years) including the reinstatement of the defective roof to the whole property.
- The unmade road to gain access to the property is the shared responsibility between the Coach House and the 3 adjacent properties fronting Derby Road. Each of these houses has ownership of the row of 6 garages adjacent to the coach house (of which 2 are included in this prospective sale).

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2.0 Description of the property

2.1 Type and age

The property is a cottage that has been extended into a coach house, and subsequently into a dwelling. It is of traditional construction in brickwork with a slate roof. The walls are not cavity walls but appear to be double skin brickwork. The exterior of the property has been rendered with a cement based render to full extent.

The adjacent garages are of traditional construction, brickwork with a slate roof, and timber doors.

The original cast iron rainwater goods and gutters have been replaced in plastic, and the external areas are paved – to the front with setts and to the rear with paving slabs.

The property was constructed in approximately the 1860s, with the extension into a coach house in the late 1800s. The property was converted to a dwelling in the 1960s.

The property is not currently listed, but it could be expected that listing will be considered in the future. From the current owner occupiers, it is understood that from 2006 the property is included within the Heaton Moor Conservation Area.

2.2 Accommodation

The property is arranged on 2 storeys, with 4 bedrooms and main bathroom on the 1st floor, and 2 landing areas. To the ground floor there is a kitchen, study, hall lobby area, through lounge / dining room and secondary entrance lobby and shower room / utility.

There are two staircases to the property; the original timber staircase serves the main landing with access to the master bedroom, 2nd bedroom and bathroom, and the secondary metal spiral staircase provides access to the 3rd and 4th bedrooms via a small landing area. The 3rd bedroom and master bedroom are linked with an access door.

The prospective purchase also includes 2 garages, currently used for storage but either could accommodate a typical family car.

2.3 Tenure and occupation

It is understood from the seller/selling agent that the property is offered for sale on a freehold basis with vacant possession. This should be confirmed as part of the conveyancing process.

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3.0 Location

3.1 Location

The property is set back from Derby Road with access along a c. 30m unmade road. This road also provides access to the garages for other properties.

The property is located in an established residential area in Heaton Moor, which is within commuting distance from Manchester City Centre. The property is overlooked to some extent on all sides. It is in close proximity to local shops, which is in keeping with the status of the area.

As mentioned previously the property is now included in Heaton Moor Conservation Area, hence any future external works may be subject to conservation area consent.

3.2 Orientation

The front elevation of the property faces in a north westerly direction.

3.3 The site and surrounding areas

The site is relatively level with no obvious risk of localised flooding. From a visual inspection, there is no obvious evidence of springs, culverts or mining activity. Affecting the property.

3.4 Local factors

The Coach House is of a different construction than the surrounding properties, the adjacent houses having been built at a later date. Most of the surrounding properties are large Victorian terraces, some of which have been converted to multiple occupation. Mostly, the surrounding properties are in good condition, and there is no evidence of vandalism, graffiti, or any industrial or major commercial installations. Generally the area appears to be relatively affluent.

3.5 Trees and hedges

There are a number of trees and hedges surrounding the property at the boundaries of adjacent houses. At this point the trees do not appear to have a detrimental effect on the property from a structural perspective. There was some build up of fallen leaves around the curtilage of the property which should be cleared to prevent blockage of drains etc.

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4.0 Surveyor's overall assessment

4.1 Surveyor's overall opinion

The property has a lot of character due to its age and construction type, which contributes to the coach house being an attractive dwelling. It has been maintained to a high standard, particularly in terms of internal finish, and is fully habitable in its current condition.

The property has a full range of services (electricity, gas, mains water and drainage, telephone, broadband, satellite television) and provides generous family accommodation, especially with respect to the feature through lounge / dining room.

It is worth noting that because the unmade access road is the shared access route to the adjacent garages, the privacy of the property will be compromised by neighbours accessing the garages.

In addition, because of the age of the property it could be expected that ongoing maintenance costs will be higher than for an equivalent house of modern construction, due to the reliance on traditional skills. This is especially the case if maintenance works are required to conform to the guidelines of the conservation area.

4.2 Areas of concern

The ceiling mounted spot lights to the kitchen are mounted directly below the bath. It is advisable to provide protection between the bathroom floorboards and the ceiling lights below to prevent water contamination of the light fittings below. In addition the earth to the electrical installation should be checked in this area.

4.3 Summary of repairs

There are no significant repairs required at this time.

4.4 Further investigations

It is recommended that the property undergo CORGI gas safety certification and an NICEIC electrical periodic test by a qualified electrician, but these are not pre-requisites of the purchase.

5.0 Construction and condition – structural frame, exterior and interior

5.1 *Constructional principles*

The property is of traditional construction with load bearing brick walls and rafter purlin pitched roof construction in timber. Lateral restraint is provided by the timber floor structure to the 1st floor.

The foundation to the oldest part of the house, the original cottage, is of solid form covered with paving slabs and tiles. This could be expected to be relatively shallow in keeping with usual construction at that time, but there is no evidence that the slab has been subject to cracking or movement. The remainder of the property has suspended timber floors over a low sub floor void.

The damp proof course to the property is usually provided by a layer of slate close the ground level, but the exact dampcourse material cannot be determined. There is no evidence of any remedial damp course being applied. There is no evidence of damp in the property, however slate damp courses can fail. Slate is not considered to be a good solution to avoid rising damp over the long term.

The roof covering is in traditional slate laid over an insulated board and sarking felt (when the roof was reinstated in c. 2001). There is a wide eaves overhang to the property which provides an attractive feature, with significant exposed timber.

There are no cellars to the property.

There is no evidence of structural movement to the garages.

5.2 *Main roof*

The roof structure is constructed in timber, and the beams are largely exposed throughout the upper floor. There is no evidence of timber decay or beetle infestation to the beams. This would be unusual for a property of this age, and it could be assumed that some of the beams are reclaimed and have been replaced.

The slate coverings are in good condition, as could be expected with the roof being reinstated in c. 2001. Accordingly, there is no visual evidence of slipped slates due to nail rot, and there are no tingles fitted. Approximately 5% of the slates are cracked, but it is important to note that probable the original slates have been refitted to the roof during reinstatement.

The valley gutters are dressed in lead and appear to be in good condition.

The rainwater goods appear relatively new and are black plastic. Originally the rainwater goods would be in cast iron, but the visual appearance has only been slightly compromised. There is no

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evidence of leakage, however there is some evidence of debris in the gutters, especially on the northeast elevation, and these should be cleared out as part of a normal maintenance regime.

The fascias appear to be in good condition and in good decorative order, as do the exposed timbers to the eaves and gable.

The finials and weather vane to the roof appear to be in good condition and properly fixed to their locations. The flashings appear in good condition.

There are a number of Velux roof windows to the property which bring a lot of light into the bedrooms and landings and hence are an excellent feature. The openings appear to have been detailed well and the window correctly installed.

There is no evidence of any water ingress to the property through the roof.

5.3 Chimneys

There is one chimney stack with 4 chimney pots. The stack remains in a serviceable condition with no obvious defect in evidence. Of the 4 chimney pots, the one nearest the southwest elevation is leaning slightly, and the pot nearest the northwest elevation appears to have sunk slightly. Neither of these requires immediate attention and remedial works can be undertaken as part of a general roof maintenance regime. The flaunching around the base of the chimney appears in good condition and the pots do not appear to be cracked from ground level.

The pointing to the brickwork chimney stack appears in good condition.

5.4 External walls

The external walls to the property are covered with cement render and painted, concealing the brickwork beneath. The render is finished with a bell cast to its lower edge and the render itself is in good condition. The decoration is also in good order.

The brickwork below the bell cast does require some routine pointing, with care being taken not to bridge the damp course. The bell cast has been situated approx. 100mm from the ground level which is below the 150mm recommended by the building regulations (this is not retrospective, so there is no 'compliance' issue). It is likely that additional paving slabs laid to the rear elevation have raised the ground level to reduce this distance. There does not appear to be any adverse affect at this time, with no evidence of penetrating damp to the property.

There is some cracking to be noted, rising diagonally from the top right corner of the kitchen window. Though the presence of render can conceal the full extent of cracking, this appears to be some long standing structural movement, and is not a cause for concern at this point.

Fig. 5.4

Crack to Render, Corner
of Kitchen Window



5.5 Damp-proof courses

The damp proof course to the property is most usually provided by a layer of slate close the ground level, and these often have a limited life. The dampcourse appears to be successful, but work to install a remedial dampcourse could be expected in the longer term. It would be expected that any subsequent internal plasterwork to be of a 'renovating' type which will resist any damp ingress.

5.6 Floor ventilation

Ventilation is provided to the sub floor by the location of air bricks to the front and rear elevations. There is no evidence that are or have been blocked, and the floor is in good condition, with no evidence of bowing or decay. It was not possible to gain access to the void beneath the floor, but also no evidence to suggest that this would be necessary. There are an adequate number of air bricks to provide sub floor ventilation, but it is important to not interrupt the cross flow of air in the future by the build up of debris in the sub floor.

5.7 Internal walls and partitions

The internal walls of the property are of 3 types;

- The original (probably) brickwork outside walls of the original property to ground and 1st floor.
- Original internal brickwork walls
- Studwork partition walls to the 1st Floor

Across the centre of the lounge / dining room, an original wall has been removed with replacement support provided by the installation of a structural lintel, probable steel but this is concealed. This has been supported by a masonry nib on each external wall. There is no evidence

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of cracking around the supporting nibs which would indicate that the installation has been completed professionally and there is no structural movement. As part of the conveyancing process, it should be confirmed that this works has been done with Building Control approval.

The internal walls are finished in plasterwork, with both masonry and stud walls generally in good condition. Several areas of plasterwork around the property have a patchy finish, but this can be addressed as part of normal decoration.

There are some shrinkage cracks around plasterboard sheets to the stud walls, and around the lounge / dining room lintel, as could be expected. Again these can be addressed as part of normal decoration.

In the garages, the walls are exposed brickwork and appear in good condition. It is worth noting that there is no fire stopping at the junction between wall and roof between each of the row of garages. This is especially relevant between garages of different users, and may be something that any prospective new owner would be advised to address.

5.8 Fireplaces and chimney breasts

There is a working fire in the oldest part of the dwelling, the original cottage, and this has been altered to accommodate a wood-burning type installation, which appears in good condition. There is a fireplace in the bedroom above but this appears to be used as an aesthetic feature, and any intent to convert it back to a usable fire would, as a minimum, require the chimney sweeping and the internal chimney construction checking to ensure the correct draw and smoke path.

There is a breast-mounted gas fire in the main living room which appears in good condition.

There is no evidence of chimney breasts being removed or any associated structural movement.

5.9 Floors

There is a combination of solid floors and exposed timber floorboards.

The solid floor areas, to the original cottage and the shower room / utility extension at either end of the property, are in good condition including the tiled floor coverings to the kitchen and wood block flooring to the study. There is no evidence of timber decay to the wood block floor, and the floors are level.

The timber floorboards to the lounge dining room and the bedrooms, bathroom and landings upstairs show evidence of some long standing insect attack notably Common Furniture Beetle (*Anobium punctatum*) to a number of areas, notably the 1st landing at the top of the stairs from the kitchen area. There is no frass or evidence of continuing activity, and the structural impact appears minimal. This is common in property of this age, and should not cause concern unless

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ongoing or having a significant structural impact. There is some evidence of the fitting of replacement reclaimed boards in place of originals, possibly due to historical insect or fungal attack, or possible due to the various phases of internal alteration that the property has been subjected to.



Fig. 5.9

Long standing evidence
of insect attack

There are no loose floorboards, and the boards have been varnish finished to a high standard. The floors are generally level and well maintained.

5.10 Ceilings

The ceilings to the property are in good condition and show little evidence of cracking; this would suggest that they have been redecorated fairly recently.

To the 1st floor there is evidence of insulation being laid beneath the roof covering, evident from the small roof void above the 1st landing. The current owners advised that this was completed when the roof was reinstated in c. 2001, and extends for the full length of the property. It was not possible to confirm this, or confirm the rating of the insulation with respect to the requirements of the Building Regulations.

The timber structure etc. to the loft space appears in good condition, and there is no evidence of water ingress.

5.11 Windows, doors and joinery

The property has had a number of original sash windows replaced, probably when it was renovated c. 2001. These windows are in keeping with the style of the house, and are in timber. Because of this there will be an ongoing maintenance requirement for repair and decoration, though it is fair to say at this time the windows do not need any repair or redecoration and remain in good condition.

It is important to note two additional points regarding the windows. Firstly the window to the 3rd bedroom (to the front elevation) has a circular window which whilst providing an attractive appearance is ill fitting to the frame. This could provide both a source of draughts and a

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potential security risk. In addition, if replacement was considered, a similar type and construction would probably be required due to the conservation area status of the property.



Fig. 5.11

Round window to 3rd
bedroom

Secondly, the kitchen window to the side elevation overlooks next door's garden. Whilst the current owners have not found this a problem, it is an unusual arrangement which is to be considered prior to purchase.

Both the internal and the external doors are in timber, and have been maintained to a high standard.

There are two staircases to the property, the main staircase is in timber construction and is a similar age to the house. This is in a similar condition to the floorboards in the property and provides an attractive feature in addition to 1st floor access. One point to note is that the balustrade does not continue to the bottom of the staircase, and this would not comply with Building Regulations if constructed today – this, however, is easily reinstated, and it is not required to comply with this in this type of building. The second staircase is a steel spiral staircase to the rear of the property, giving access to the bathroom utility and 4th bedroom. This is fairly new and in good condition.

The skirting boards and architraves to the property have been maintained in good condition, and are complementary to the floors and doors.

The kitchen installation is fairly new and is to a high standard with fitted stainless steel finished under counter fridge, freezer, and range-style cooker with canopy. The buyer should confirm whether these items are included in the sale. There is a wall mounted Ideal "Isar" combination boiler, which has an "A" rating in the SEDBUK assessment (A government sponsored database for the efficiency rating of the boiler).

The bathroom has been well finished, with quality sanitaryware. Of particular note is the large slipper bath; this is an expensive installation and a good feature of the property. The seals etc.

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around the shower have been well maintained, and there is no evidence of condensation damage or water leakage.

As mentioned in item 4.2, the ceiling mounted spot lights to the kitchen are mounted directly below the bath. It is advisable to provide protection between the bathroom floorboards and the ceiling lights below to prevent water contamination of the light fittings below.

The shower room / utility, has also been well finished in tiles, with sanitaryware to a similar standard. The purchaser should confirm whether the white goods etc. are included with the sale.

5.12 Finishes and decorations

The decoration to the property has been maintained to a high standard, both internally and externally. It is important to consider that the external decoration of the property must be maintained to protect the building fabric in the long term, with a regular cycle of say 5 years.

5.13 Dampness

There is no evidence of any damp ingress or moisture damage to the property. The garage areas do not show evidence of rain penetration, but could not be considered dry – therefore it is not recommended to store eg. soft furnishings. There is no evidence of a dampproof course to the garages.

5.14 Structural movement

There has been a small degree of long standing structural movement to the property, as discussed in section 5.6, causing superficial damage. There is some deflection to the main roof ridge, but this appears to be original and not as a result of any structural movement, and is not a cause for concern at this point.

There is no evidence that the minor structural movement that the property has undergone in the past is ongoing, and no remedial works are required at this time.

6.0 Services

The property is supplied by mains natural gas, electricity, water and telephone, and is connected to the mains sewers.

6.1 Gas Installation

The gas installation appears to be in good condition, however it is recommended to have a qualified gas fitter complete a CORGI certificate on the installation (also covering the other gas installations in the house) as a matter of good practice. It is understood that the boiler has been serviced regularly on a British Gas contract.

6.2 Electrical Installation

The electrical installation is supported by an RCD consumer unit, wall mounted within a cupboard in the secondary front entrance. This indicates that the installation is within the last 15 years. It is advisable to have a periodic inspection undertaken by an NICEIC registered electrician to confirm this. There are a number of stand-alone smoke detector alarms in the property, and it is recommended that these be upgraded to linked hardwired smoke detector alarms at such point as the property has major electrical works undertaken.

6.3 Water and Central Heating Installation

The water installation within the property appears to be fairly new, and has been installed using primarily copper pipework, though it is possible there is some plastic pipework to concealed areas. The water supply to the property from the water main may be in the original lead pipe, and in due course this should be replaced. This, however, is not an urgent requirement and is quite normal for a property of this type and age. The current owners may be able to provide documentation to show that this pipe has been upgraded to plastic during the renovations c. 2001, either way it would be advisable to request this information prior to purchase, as any potential trench or mole operation to Derby Rd would be expensive due to the distance from the property.

The hot and cold water supplies to all areas of the property are working as per specification, and there is a cold water tap the front of the garages. It is important to note that this exposed tap is vulnerable to freezing in the winter – lagging would reduce this risk.

The central heating installation is in good condition, but there is one point to note with the non-standard valve installation to the shower room / utility. This sunken valve arrangement may make future maintenance difficult. As the system uses a combination boiler, there are no hot or cold water storage tanks in the property.



Fig. 6.3

Valve arrangement to
shower room / utility
radiator

6.4 Drainage Installation

It was not possible to raise manholes to the front of the property. There is no external evidence of any drain problems. The surface water and the foul drain are combined as would be normal with a property of this age. It is to be noted that it is likely that the property owner would be responsible for the drainage run along the access road, until the point where it meets the main sewer under Derby Road. It is advisable that this is determined prior to purchase.

To the right hand elevation of the property on the outside wall to the shower room utility, there is a waste pipe from the shower is half sunk in the paving. This is a poor detail and should be reworked in due course to reduce the vulnerability of this pipe to impact damage.



Fig. 6.4

Waste pipe from shower

6.5 Telephone Installation

There is a standard BT telephone connection to the property, and this provides capability for broadband at the property.

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6.6 Other services

There is a “Sky Digital” satellite dish mounted on the chimney, it is not know if this is in working order. This would suggest that there is no cable TV/cable broadband connection to the property, and there is no evidence of such a connection.

7.0 Environmental and other issues

7.1 Orientation and exposure

The property is surrounded by other dwellings giving some shelter from wind etc. but it is usual that the slate roof is more susceptible to wind damage than a concrete or clay tiled equivalent. Most of this vulnerability related to how well the roof is maintained.

7.2 Thermal insulation and energy efficiency

The property being made from fairly thick solid masonry walls is thermally 'heavy' and may take a considerable time to warm during the winter. When warm, however, this will dissipate slowly and be easier to control with appropriate thermostatic controls.

The roof has been insulated as previously described, but it is unlikely there is any floor or wall insulation due to the age and construction type of the property. Due to this the property will be limited in terms of the performance of its thermal envelope.

The central heating boiler meets an efficient standard as previously described, and the windows to property are mostly double glazed, albeit to an earlier standard than would be installed today (c. 12mm cavity, air fill).

It would be difficult to raise the standard of the thermal shell of the building without adversely affecting the building's character. Windows could be upgraded to house a wider double glazed unit, eg, with argon fill, and walls could be lined with insulation. In addition a general programme of fitting draught excluders etc. would assist this process, as would upgrade to energy efficient light bulbs.

7.3 Ventilation

Ventilation to all areas is passive and provided by air bricks, supplemented by opening windows as required (eg. bathroom). In the kitchen and shower room / utility this ventilation is supplemented by forced mechanical ventilation providing the required 15m³/s extract rate.

7.4 Noise and disturbance

There was no evidence of any noise or other nuisances (eg. smells) whilst at the property and the location of the property in an established residential area gives confidence that this will not be a problem in the future, although we cannot be certain of this.

7.5 Means of escape

Egress from the property in the case of emergency is possible through the 1st or 2nd entrances to the front elevation, or the rear door from the kitchen on the rear elevation.

To the 1st floor egress is available either down the primary or secondary staircases. or if required through the opening windows.

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7.7 Hazardous materials

There is no evidence of any hazardous materials used in the fabric of the property or the garages. It is important to confirm this, however, prior to undertaking any invasive works in the future.

7.8 Security

The property has security rated locks to the entrances and a series of exterior lights with passive infra-red detection (PIR). Security is compromised at the property by the right of way afforded to the garages from the neighbouring properties. There are also a number of rear garden gates to the properties to the rear of the house, it is not known if these gates are supported by any legal right of way or are just a physical access point.

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8.0 Outbuildings, grounds and boundaries

8.1 *Gardens and grounds*

The setts and paving to the front and rear of the property are in good condition although do have a light covering of moss, and would benefit from cleaning to reduce the risk of slipping. There is a fish pond built into the rear patio area which will require ongoing maintenance, and could pose a risk to children if unprotected.

8.2 *Garages*

There are no garden areas as such to the property, other than a rear paved area with small areas of planting.

8.3 *Boundaries*

The boundary fence to the property is in a reasonable condition, but will require ongoing maintenance. It is not clear who would have responsibility for this; it may well be shared between the Coach House and neighbouring properties. To the side elevation, the wall of the property forms the boundary to the neighbouring garden. It would be advisable for the owners of the property to arrange an ongoing agreement with the neighbour for access to the elevation for maintenance purposes, indeed this may already be in place. This would be supported by the Access to Neighbouring Land Act 1992 if required.

9.0 Matters for legal adviser's attention

I would advise that the following matters should be addressed by the legal adviser, inter alia;

- Property Tenure – Freehold vs. Leasehold etc.
- Building Regulations approval for the removal of the wall to the centre of the lounge / dining room
- Building Regulations approval for the works to reinstate the roof, if applicable
- Determination of the Rights of Way etc. for the garages and the access to the rear of the neighbouring properties
- Responsibility for maintaining the access road to Derby Rd and the common areas to the front of the shared garages.
- Responsibility for maintenance of drainage and incoming water main
- Responsibility for maintaining boundary fences and walls
- Determination if any agreements are in place for maintenance access to the adjacent property
- What appliances, white goods, fixtures and fittings are included in the sale
- Guarantees for windows and roof coverings
- The presence of any easements with respect to the shared access road and common areas adjacent to the shared garages.

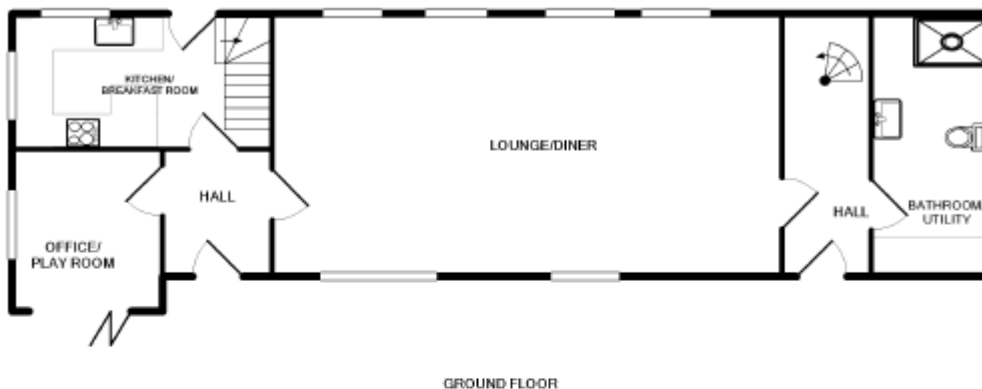
10.0 Valuation, Scale Plans and Recommendation

10.1 Valuation

I would recommend that a fair valuation for this property is £490,000.00, based on the general market conditions in the area and the standard and size of the accommodation offered.

10.2 Scale plans

For information only, see below layout of property, not to scale.



10.3 Recommendations

The property is in good condition and has been maintained well. There are minor areas of concern but no obvious areas that would lead to a recommendation not to proceed with the purchase.

It provides the potential for a good family home and has considerable character and history.

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Conversely, the property has some limitations in terms of the lack of garden and the shared access considerations. In addition, the layout is non-standard and unusual.

The property is in a convenient location for local services and is in the commuter belt for Manchester City Centre.