

## 1. INFORMATION

1.1 **Name and Address of Client** - M....

1.2 **Address of Property** - ....

1.3 **Local Taxes** - To be confirmed by your Legal Advisors.

1.4 **Date of Inspection** - 12th February 2003

1.5 **Weather** - It was dull, overcast and showery at the time of my inspection after a period of mixed but reasonably seasonal weather.

1.6 **Limits of Inspection** - The property was fully furnished in addition to which certain parts were not accessible and my advice is therefore limited to those parts usually Visible and as described. Assessments have been made in regard to other parts although it cannot automatically be assumed that those inaccessible areas not referred to are necessarily free of problems.

1.7 **Tenancies** - The property appeared to be in single-family occupation at the time of my inspection although your legal advisors must ensure that full vacant possession will be available on completion with particular reference to the absentee wife.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

2.1 **Description of Property** - The property comprises a substantial detached family residence standing on a split-level plot in the residential area of Les Adrets convenient for the centre of the village.

The original accommodation is laid out at ground floor level although there is a two-storey extension located to the righthand side as you face the front door and in this regard, you have raised the question as to its legality, the understanding being that it is some 40 cms higher than was originally agreed on the permit.

Clearly this is something in respect of which your Notaire has to advise, but it would seem from my inspection that the original consent probably allowed for the extension to run through at the existing roof line and this has been lifted to accommodation an upper floor within the extension area.

I can only repeat the conversations we have had on the matter where I advised that it is my understanding similar situations are to be found extensively throughout the Les Adrets area including, although this may be apocryphal, the mayor's own house. Clearly an issue on which you will have to take a view. The obvious downside would be the removal of the upper floor within the extension and the lowering of the roof line to comply with the permit.

2.2 **Accommodation** - A deep recessed entrance porch opens from the carport to the front of the property, this in turn opening to the principal reception area. This could be described as a classical French room with the kitchen area open plan at the front, an elevated fireplace and two sets of casement doors to the rear garden and covered rear patio. An inner hallway affords access to the three original bedrooms together with the fitted bathroom and separate WC.

To the opposite of the living room there are glazed double doors opening to the new extension area and whilst the ground floor would make a fine reception room with its glass fronted log burning stove, it is currently a bedroom from which an ensuite bathroom opens. A sharply rising staircase accesses the first floor of the extension which is formed into the roof void and there would appear to be two very small windows opening on each of the front and rear elevations.

The windows would appear to be extensively double-glazed and there is a limited form of central heating provided by an assortment of convector heaters.

2.3 **Outbuildings/Parking** - The property has a generously proportioned garaged accessed via the carport to the front and there are certainly areas where additional parking could be provided. I note that you have identified the head of the driveway, just

inside the front gates, for this purpose which would seem ideally suited subject to the removal of the tree in the centre of this area.

- 2.4 Age of Property** - I understand that the original property dates from 1993 with the two-storey extension having been added in 1998. I have no information in regard to any other extension works, which might have been carried out with particular reference to the entrance porch/car port.
- 2.5 Orientation** - I would estimate the property to have an approximately southerly aspect to the rear but this must certainly be confirmed if it is significant to your purchase.
- 2.6 Location/Amenities** - The property stands in a residential location accessed by way of poorly maintained roads quite close to the centre of the village of Les Adrets, which offers limited local shopping facilities and some other amenities. Having previously been purchasing another property in the vicinity, I assume that you will have satisfied yourself in regard to the advantages and disadvantages of the general area.
- 2.7 Summary of Construction** - The property would appear to be of traditional concrete and cinder block construction with a single skin wall although it was evident that some of the blocks at least are hollow offering some thermal qualities.

The whole rises to a multi-pitch roof, which is principally finished with interlocking clay Roman tiles although there are some pantiles, these also having been used to the ridges. As is normal, the eaves have been triple jetted to throw rainwater from the roof slopes away from the elevations and, as you will be aware, this generally has mixed results.

The chimneystacks are formed in brick/blockwork, being covered and laterally vented at the top and there is very little external joinery beyond the windows, doors and shutters, the glazing seemingly double to most areas.

### **3. EXTERNAL CONDITION**

- 3.1 Chimneys/Flues** - The property has two-chimney stack rising above the roofline where the original and new structures abut. These are of a traditional design, with sealed tops and lateral vents. These serve the fireplaces already described at ground floor level and I can only advise that it is important to ensure each of the reception areas has adequate fixed ventilation to ensure free exhaust.

They appear to be of block construction, which has been rendered externally, and, despite considerable effort it was not possible to obtain a view of where either abut the roofline to establish the form and condition of the associated flashings. I can only advise, therefore, that I found no evidence internally that there were water penetration problems at the time of my visit.

- 3.2 Roof** - As noted, the property has a somewhat complicated multi-pitched formation, most areas being of double pitched design sloping front and rear although there are monopitches over the rear terrace the front carport porch. The roofing splits into three areas as below.

The principal area extends from the left hand end of the property covering the bedrooms and extending down over the garage to the front with different pitches on the rear slopes. A detailed inspection of the visible slopes failed to indicate any serious problems with the tiles seemingly well-laid and rising to well-bedded ridges, the upper part over the living room having been repointed, albeit in a slightly messy fashion. Such flashings as there are were appeared well formed and bedded also.

Finally there is the double pitched roof slope above the newer part of the property and I can confirm that this also seems to have been properly constructed with well laid tiles rising to a properly bedded ridge without evidence of problems or distortions.

The eaves are generally triple jetted in the traditional manner to throw surface water away from the wall elevations and also provide cross ventilation to the roof voids and these appeared to be functioning normally at the time of my inspection. Some minor staining was noted on some of the elevations where surface water is washing off the walls laterally which is not unusual but often difficult to rectify. I found no evidence that this was causing problems by way of water penetration however.

To the front of the property there is an area of monopitched roofing, which forms the carport and entrance to the property, substantially formed over a timber structure on piers. I assume that this is the roof you are contemplating removing and can only say that it appears to be totally self-contained and I cannot imagine which its removal should have any effect on the remainder of the structure.

To the rear there is a shallow monopitched roof running out over the original terrace and I note that you are contemplating extending this to the extended depth of this terrace in its existing form. I see no problem from a structural standpoint although you may wish to give some thought to the finish line at its lower edge in regard to the height and the possible shading of the adjoining accommodation.

- 3.3 Rainwater Goods** - In line with the majority of properties in this area, there are no formal rainwater goods, the design depending, as noted above, on the jetting at eaves level and this is an area where you will have to satisfy yourselves.

I have commented earlier on the minor staining to the flank walls where there is a slight run off from the verge tiling and, in addition to this, there is a level of splashback on the lower elevations in association with the jetting. Again an area where you will have to take a view.

- 3.4 Walls/DPC** - As previously described, the property is generally of block construction, these blocks, where visible, were hollow offering thermal qualities. The whole of the external elevations have been rendered down to ground level which may have implications in regard to dampness although I will comment in this under a later heading.

A detailed inspection of the elevations and associated supporting pillars and I am pleased to be able to confirm that, at the time of my inspection, I found no evidence of any levels of structural movement which I might have felt should give cause for concern. You will, however, have noted the plastic strip which has been overlaid on the rear elevation where the new and old structures abut and this may indicate some level of movement differential which would manifest as localised cracking and not be at all unusual.

You will have noted that ground levels rise on the external elevations to the front corner of the extension and I assume some form of tanking has been incorporated into the structure at this point to obviate damp problems, but will again comment after an internal inspection. Where a short retaining wall has been formed to hold back the elevated flowerbed at this point, there is, again, some minor movement differential although nothing, which I felt, should currently give cause for concern.

- 3.5 External Joinery** - This is substantially limited to doors and shutters and a general inspection at the time of my inspection failed to indicate any serious problems. You will, however, have noted that, at the present time the condition of the varnishing and staining leaves something to be desired which will lead to problems by way of decay if not attended to.

The substructure to the rear porch and the front carport would also fall under this heading and, in regard to the latter in particular, it has to be said that the general quality of workmanship in this area is not as good as the remainder of the property.

- 3.6 Windows** - These are formed in wood and, in part at least, a narrow section form of sealed unit double-glazing has been provided. The framing by way of glazing bars has been formed on the inner surface as a decorative feature.

I shall comment in greater detail under a subsequent heading in regard to the condition if this should appear to be presenting problems. You will note that metal thresholds have been formed across the base of the door, which provides both a better seal, and obviate decay often caused by the bottom of the doors standing in puddling. This threshold must, however, be noted when entering and leaving through these areas.

- 3.7 Decorations** - This has substantially been covered under the previous headings with particular reference to the condition of the varnishing and staining. It is clear that you should be budgeting for fairly early expenditure in this area.

- 3.8 Garage/Outbuildings** - This is formed in blockwork, which, as with the main structure, has been rendered externally, and the whole is accessed via side hung double doors to the front and these appeared to function normally at the time of my visit.

The roof is a monopitch structure with the tiles overlaid on battens which in turn bear onto a rafter structure and, whilst I found no evidence of instability at the time of my inspection, it is worth noting that where the rafters sit on the outside wall, I found no evidence of a wall plate and the feet of the rafters are not all well supported in this area.

- 3.9 Site** - As you appreciate, the site falls sharply from the road and principally falls into three areas with the uppermost, the road line being held back by a substantial retaining wall which is formed of rendered blockwork with weep holes. A detailed inspection failed to indicate any serious problems by way of deflection at the time of my visit.

Also at this top level, there is a plateau inside the gate where I note that you are contemplating providing two car parking spaces, which, once the tree has been removed would seem to be a sensible proposition. The driveway itself is a somewhat charmless aspect of the property and, whilst I assume that it is functional,

I note your plans to provide something more appealing in this area. The only comment, which I can add would be for you to ensure that the surface you choose, provides a reasonable grip in view of the steepness of the whole.

There are two matters which you have touch on that I will refer to at this point as we are looking at the right general area. Firstly, the carport would not appear to have any direct relationship to the structure of the building and was clearly built subsequent to this. I cannot therefore see that its removal would be of any significance. Moving on to the matter of the small laundry which you are considering in the corner by the door at the bottom of the stairs, I am not clear as to how this would work although it is important to establish the need for any necessary permits in view of the current situation relating to other areas as discussed.

The house itself stands on a plateau, which is increasing, elevated to the left hand side although there is not formal retaining wall despite the drop which I would calculate to be around five metres at it highest. An inspection failed to show any serious distortion or history of landslip at the time of my inspection.

Below this, there is a smaller plateau with walkways down from the upper level and it is at this point that the above ground pool now sits although the site falls yet again, albeit by a lesser amount to the boundary lines. Still no retaining has been formed and, in the light of your proposals, I think you might find it difficult to form one on either boundary due to the lie of the land.

Clearly this is something which will have to be given careful consideration in the light of your proposals to excavate for a below ground level pool which will inevitably disturb the ground although I understand from Robert at Chrisma that he has thought this through and has some proposals.

In regard to the concerns raised by your Notaire as to the stability of the ground in this area, we have discussed before that L'Esterel has a reputation for movement in general but I would repeat that a detailed inspection of both the house and the plot failed to indicate problems having manifested to any level during the property's ten year history to date.

- 3.10 Drains** - I understand from the vendor that the property is currently on some form of communal drainage with the neighbouring houses details of which will not be provided as to rights and liabilities via the Notaire. There are a number of inspection chambers within the grounds but, whilst I am unable to provide much more information, I found no evidence of problems at the time of my visit.

#### **4. INTERNAL CONDITION**

- 4.1 Roof Space** - There is a relatively shallow roof void above the original ground floor accommodation which does not in fact extend over the whole and limited access was possible via a hatchway above the inner hallway.

I can confirm that the roof construction is traditional with the tiles overlaid on battens that are supported over modern trusses that have been laterally braced to obviate lateral distortion. The levels of cross ventilation appeared adequate and some form of rockwool insulation has been laid which will provide limited insulation.

The far end of the loft above the further bedrooms etc was not accessible and I am therefore unable to offer any opinion as to the form of construction and the general condition.

Above the new extension there is no roof void at the first floor accommodation has been constructed into the roof void and the cut timber rafters now form an attractive and integral part of the ceiling line.

- 4.2 Ceilings** - It would appear that the ceilings within the original part of the property are formed in some type of plasterboard, which has been plastered to a finish and decorated accordingly. In the main, these were found to be in acceptable order although one or two areas of minor misalignment were noted, in the cloakroom for example, but nothing, which I felt, should give cause for concern.

Within the newer part of the property, the ceiling below the upper floor has been boarded and taped which was found to be peeling away at the time of my visit although I anticipate you will be looking to upgrade the area generally. At first floor level there is decorated boarding between the rafters, which was found to be satisfactory, and I imagine you will be upgrading this finish as well.

- 4.3 Walls/Partitions** - Throughout the property, the walls have either been formed in or overlaid with some form of plasterboard dry lining which avoids the need to plaster and provides an additional form of insulation. A very common form of building construction in new houses throughout the UK and becoming increasingly common in France.

It seems likely that this has been formed within aluminium framing which would certainly appear to be the construction used between rooms, providing the very thin section walling on which you have commented.

In regard to your proposals to increase the depth of the walling, unless you completely rebuild, this would, I feel, prove a difficult proposition. You might of course form a second wall adjoining the other which would seem, again, to be an unusual project.

I can confirm that the internal walls generally appeared in acceptable order. You may well look to forming a more acceptable wall to enclose the ensuite bathroom within the extension, as this is certainly substandard. At the same time, I foresee no problems in lowering the ceiling as per your enquiry and this would provide the ideal opportunity to install downlighters.

- 4.4 Fireplaces/Chimney Breasts** - Dealing initially with the fireplace within the new extension, this appears well formed and would seem to have been used at sometime, probably as a log burner with its glass front. I found no evidence of fan assistance but it would be sensible to ensure that the chimney is clear and I would advise on the prudence of providing some form of fixed external ventilation to the room to facilitate free exhaust.

Moving to the main fireplace within the original fireplace within the main living room, much the same levels of advice pertain. In regard to the French penchant for putting vents into chimneybreasts to obtain additional heat circulating, be aware that, all too often, these can exhaust fumes.

- 4.5 Floors** - The property has solid flooring throughout the ground floor, with the whole of the original finished with a variety of tiles whilst the floor to the extension is covered with a parquet tiled panelling.

The vendor assures me this parquet is a thin section of wood that has been stuck down and should be liftable although such advice would be beyond the scope of my assistance and you should carefully test part before committing yourself. It is likely that this will require to be done professionally and may need some form of solvent on the adhesive to avoid damaging the wood.

I found no evidence of distortion within the flooring to the ground floor generally and to the upper floor, this is conventional boarding overlaid on the ceiling joists to the room below.

- 4.6 Dampness** - Measurements were taken at relevant points using a moisture-detecting meter and I am pleased to be able to confirm that, at the time of my inspection, all readings to the accessible areas were within acceptable tolerances.
- 4.7 Timber Defects** - Again, within the limits of my inspection, I am pleased to be able to confirm that I found no evidence of problems although it is presumed that the appropriate certification will be provided with the transfer documents.
- 4.8 Internal Joinery** - This was found to be reasonably consistent with what one might expect to find in a property of this age and specification. You should note that there is internal glazing, which may prove hazardous, as it is not in toughened or reinforced glass.

Moving on to the matter of the staircase which you are seeking to modify, I am sure that you have worked out for yourselves that to get a more appropriate angle, it will encroach over the bathroom ceiling although the run of joists is in the correct line to facilitate support, the timber trimmers will require modification. I do not see that the existing staircase could be modified.

- 4.9 Windows** - The windows generally have been formed in a satisfactory manner and to an acceptable standard generally. The double-glazing is of a fairly thin section but, in the south of France something of a bonus.

Where checked they functioned normally and you will have noted the metal threshold which will hopefully obviate decay although must be remembered when using the casement doors. The far doors within the extension area would not unlock at the time of my visit.

- 4.10 Kitchen** - This has been fitted to a surprisingly high standard for a French house and you will no doubt have satisfied yourselves in this general regard.
- 4.11 Sanitary** - There is an original bathroom and WC where supplied and wastes appeared to function normally at the time of my visit. I do have to express concern in regard to the seals and associated grouting around the bath. This is in need of urgent attention, particularly if you intend to use the shower, as the stud partitioning is presently vulnerable.

In addition to this there is an ensuite bath and shower room, again supplies and wastes functioned normally at the time of my visit and similar comments apply in regard to seals etc.

- 4.12 Decorations** - I assume that you will have satisfied yourselves in this area.
- 4.13 Cellars** - I found no evidence that this would be applicable in the subject property.
- 4.14 Thermal Insulation** - With the double glazing and loft insulation that was visible in at least part of the property together with the dry lining to many of the external walls, I can only say that both are unusual in this area and must be treated as something of a bonus.

## **5. SERVICES**

- 5.1 Electricity** - There is a distribution unit located adjacent to the front door and it was pleasing to note that, from a visual inspection, the wiring etc seemed to a higher than average standard. It is, however, my usual advice to Clients that electrical systems should be checked on a five yearly cycle and, as no one seemed able to confirm in regard to the levels of work which accompanied the extension, such would be a prudent move at this time.

Some of the lighting is, however, poorly secured to the ceiling line and the lighting fixture within the garage area must be treated as potential hazardous with exposed wiring visible at the present time.

**5.2 Gas** - Not applicable.

**5.3 Plumbing** - At the time of my inspection, supplies and wastes appeared to function normally although, for obvious reasons, I do not check showers. The water heating is by way of the electrical storage cylinder within the cupboard to the far bedrooms.

Again, whilst I found no evidence of problems, it would be prudent to have the whole looked at by a qualified plumber. May I suggest that it would be sensible to properly secure the plumbing at first floor level where I foresee no serious problems with the installation of a shower room over the ensuite at ground floor.

**5.4 Central Heating** - All heating must be checked by way of the electrical test.

## **6. MATTERS FOR SOLICITORS**

**6.1 Roads and Footpaths** - It is important for you to establish and confirm rights and liabilities in regard to accessing the property.

**6.2 Rights of Way/Easements** - I noted nothing of significance at the time of my inspection but your legal advisors must confirm.

**6.3 Road Agreements** - This would form part of any research in regard to rights and liabilities relating to access.

**6.4 Management Companies** - I doubt this would be applicable although confirmation must be sought in regard to matters, which are commonly shared.

**6.5 Drains and Sewers** - I understand that the property is on some form of common drainage system with the neighbouring house in respect of which rights and liabilities must be confirmed with particular regard to costs.

**6.6 Planning/Building Regulations** - Clearly, in regard to the extension, this must be considered a grey area although the vendor seems quite clear that the property has been overbuilt by some 40cms in regard to the height of the extension.

Whilst it is impossible for to comment further without a sight of the plans, which presumably accompanied the application for a permit, an inspection would indicate that the original concept of the extension was very probably for the roofline to extend out from the existing.

This is pure conjecture and is the acknowledgment that such is probably the case with many of the neighbouring houses throughout Les Adrets; stories of the mayor's house are probably apocryphal however,

Should it ultimately prove necessary to make modifications for compliance and this simply mean realigning the roof, the structure of cut timber rafters should make this a relatively straightforward proposition although clearly there would be the effective loss of the first floor accommodation.

**6.7 Planning/Highway Proposals** - I am unaware of anything, which would be significant to this heading.

## **7. GENERAL ADVICE**

**7.1 Schedule of Hazards** - I would stress that the following Schedules are for your convenience and must not be treated as definitive lists of works or other matters requiring attention/consideration. It is important that the report be considered as a whole and all points raised under 7.1 and 7.2 must be read in conjunction with the overall report.

1. Ensure flues and chimneystacks vent freely, if necessary provide fixed external ventilation to the associated rooms.
2. Ensure that the provision of a below ground swimming pool does not disrupt the status quo in regard to the stability of the central and lower banking at the rear in view of the potential difficulties in providing retaining walls.
3. Be aware of the potential hazards associate with internal glazing.
4. Not my advice in regard to the formal checking of electrics and plumbing.

**7.2 Schedule of Repairs** - I would draw your attention to the advice given at the commencement of paragraph 7.1, which is equally applicable to the following Schedule.

1. Give minor attention to the rendering on the rear chimneystack.
2. Note comments in regard to surface water running from the roof slopes.
3. Ensure high ground levels do not cause problems with dampness.
4. Be aware of the areas of movement differential and ensure sealed against possible water penetration.
5. Note comments in regard to the decorative condition of shutters and windows, properly prepare and re-stain/varnish.
6. Note comments in regard to the support of the base of the rafters in the garage and ensure properly bedded and secure.
7. Note my comments in regard to some of the ceiling areas, properly secure taping and complete finish within the new extension area.
8. Note my comments in regard to the stub partitioning generally and with particular reference to the ensuite in the new extension.
9. Note comments in regard to relocating the parquet flooring.
10. Ensure that the appropriate certification is provided in regard to the matter of wood boring insects.
11. Ensure the seals and grouting are in good order within the bathrooms, with particular reference to the baths and showers.

I trust that you find the foregoing report provides you with the information you were seeking, but hope that you will feel free to contact me with any queries or should there be other areas in respect of which you feel I may be able to assist. In the meantime, I remain

Yours sincerely,

**Ian Graham FRICS**  
**Chartered Surveyor**