

INIGO



St Andrew's Chapel

SANDLING, KENT
£950,000 FREEHOLD

Awarded a Grade II* listing in recognition of its historic importance, St Andrew's Chapel is a remarkable building, now transformed into a comfortable and spacious three-bedroom home. Its name is believed to come from its housing of a relic of St Andrew in the 15th century; it was later owned by the Tudor poet Thomas Wyatt and, in the 20th century, served as a post office. The house is presently owned by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), which worked with specialist craftspeople over seven years on the project to ensure the utmost sensitivity towards its astonishing early fabric. SPAB now hopes to find the next custodians of the home, who they hope will continue to breathe new life into its historic bones.

We've written more about St Andrew's Chapel in our Almanac.

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Setting the Scene

The chapel lies in Sandling, a hamlet to the north of Maidstone and on the periphery of the Kent Downs National Landscape. The area has a storied past: it is also home to Allington Castle, where the family of courtier Sir Thomas Wyatt lived during the Tudor period.

St Andrew's Chapel and its adjoining priest's lodging are an important part of Sandling's historic tapestry. Its main section, built from ragstone, dates to 1484 and is crowned with a characterful Kent peg-tiled roof, repaired by SPAB in recent years. Made by hand from clay, each peg has a slight colour variation and is charmingly irregular; SPAB worked with specialist manufacturers and craftspeople in the local area to replace damaged tiles with new ones, indiscernible from their older counterparts.

Other structural works include the addition of Warmcel wood fibre boards to walls, which were then lime plastered, and the installation of a low-temperature heating system that can work without fossil fuel. A wonderful new kitchen has been fitted along with repaired floorboards and wood blocks, and 1930s linoleum, covered in some areas by protective new sisal carpet. Historic features range from medieval squint windows to 20th-century tiled fire surrounds.

More information about SPAB's work on St Andrew's Chapel can be found on their website.

History of St Andrew's Chapel

During their time as custodians of the building, SPAB has forensically researched the building's fascinating past. The buildings on the site date from the 1430s or before and are linked to nearby Boxley Abbey; the main chapel was constructed in 1484. It is believed that St Andrew's served as a reliquary chapel at a gateway to Boxley Abbey, where pilgrims arrived at the site. It is thought that St Andrew's finger was displayed in the chapel, visible externally through two of the squints that remain in situ at the north and south of the building.

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In 1538, the last Abbot of Boxley surrendered the Abbey and its surroundings to Henry VIII. The lands were distributed; Boxley Abbey and St Andrews were given to Sir Thomas Wyatt at first, a Tudor poet and a rumoured lover of Anne Boleyn. The building was then, in either the 16th or early 17th century, converted into a private dwelling and extended in several directions. It was then a smallholding on the Boxley Abbey estate, but in the late 19th century became the village grocery and post office. Prior to its purchase by SPAB in 2018, the building had been unoccupied for 50 years.

The Grand Tour

Spanning some 1,553 sq ft, the primary plan is a generous home, reconfigured with several interconnected ground-floor living spaces, and three serene bedrooms on the first floor. Its thorough transformation, designed by Malcolm Fryer Architects as part of a specialist team, has aimed to amplify, rather than strip back, its original features: palpable reminders of the building's manifold past lives can be seen in every room. Careful intervention has added wood-fibre insulation and secondary glazing throughout much of the space to improve energy efficiency and acoustic insulation. Uniquely for a period building of such intact fabric, a state-of-the-art MVHR system has been installed to regulate the building's heat and internal ventilation.

Entry is to a hallway, with a large WC on one side and a kitchen on the other. The latter has been recently refitted with sustainable hardwood cabinets, an oak countertop and appliances, including a DeLonghi range-style oven. Handsome boards, woodblocks and bricks span underfoot, adding a deep, tonal richness. A repaired leaded mullion window, cleverly protected behind an internal Storm secondary glazed panel, faces out to the surrounding greenery.

In two of the three reception rooms, a simple limewash enhances the undulating. Exposed beams span overhead, and softwood floorboards have been conserved throughout. An original stone priest's door is a remarkable survival and provides a passage from the kitchen to one of the rooms, a proximity that would make the space a wonderful formal dining room. SPAB's gentle reimagining of these rooms lends a great degree of flexibility to suit whatever need.

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Sisal-covered stairs reach up to the first floor, passing historic paintwork on the ascent. Upstairs, the first-floor landing has been partly panelled – a material motif that ties in with the kitchen below. Limewashed walls here make the bedrooms a tranquil space, and leaded windows face out to the grounds. Here and throughout, smart radiators have been added. Storage has also been accounted for, with built-in cupboards in the primary bedroom and the hallway. The principal bedroom also has fittings for an en suite, if desired.

A pristine bathroom has also been fitted on the upper level, with a bath, overhead shower, and tall column radiator. Another deep-set leaded window here draws in natural light and frames views out to the bucolic surroundings.

The Great Outdoors

When SPAB first acquired St Andrew's Chapel, the grounds were entirely overrun. They worked with local landscapers, carving out sections of lawn that visually meld with the surrounding farmland. Mature trees, including laurel and yew, dot the grounds, and newer plantings include wisteria along the cloister wall. Beneath the ground, an extensive new draining system has been laid, linked to cast-iron guttering by J & JW Longbottoms of Huddersfield

A wonderful cloister walkway with oak posts and a striking steel roof runs between the front drive and back lawn, providing covered access to an especially large, timber-clad garage that houses the air source heating system. The cloister walkway offers a sheltered spot from which to admire the rear garden throughout the seasons.

Out and About

Sandling lies on the edge of the Kent Downs National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that stretches from Surrey to the White Cliffs of Dover, replete with all manner of trails for cycling, walking, and even horseback riding.

A number of historic sites lie within easy reach of the home. The world-class gardens at Sissinghurst can be reached in around 35 minutes, while even closer to home lies Stoneacre, a National Trust-managed medieval yeoman's house and garden.

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Maidstone, under 10 minutes away by car, is a well-equipped town centre with a beloved theatre, the Hazlitt, the inspired Maidstone Museum, and Mote Park, with its leisure centre and outdoor facilities including sports fields and a climbing wall.

The coast is a short drive away too; Whitstable can be reached in under 40 minutes and is known for its seemingly endless beaches and annual oyster festival. Excellent road connections mean that the likes of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate can all be reached in under an hour.

There are several state-run schools nearby, along with Invictus Grammar School for Girls. Private options include the King's School in Rochester, a 16-minute drive away. There is also a Montessori nursery in Maidstone.

The area is well-connected for access to London. Services run from Maidstone East to London Victoria in just over an hour, and from Maidstone West to London St Pancras in approximately 49 minutes; the stations are an eight and 12-minute drive from the house, respectively. The Folkestone Eurotunnel can be reached in under 40 minutes for travel to Europe.

Council Tax Band: TBC

INIGO



About

Inigo is an estate agency that specialises in selling marvellous historic homes, believing that a beautiful home is a pleasure that never ages. We connect discerning individuals with extraordinary spaces, no matter the price or provenance. Covering urban and rural locations across Britain, our team combines proven experience selling distinctive homes with design and architectural expertise.