

INIGO



Vane Court

BIDDENDEN, KENT

£3,950,000 FREEHOLD

Formerly the home of the King and Queen of Siam, the Grade II*-listed Vane Court is an historic 15th-century Wealden hall in the sought-after village of Biddenden, Kent. It is a house of exceptional character and has been the subject of a comprehensive renovation by the current owners, who have given careful attention to restorative elements while sensitively ushering in aspects of modernity. The main house exceeds 6,500 sq ft internally and incorporates six bedrooms and several versatile living and study spaces. The house rests in around 5.36 acres of tranquil formal gardens and ponds, with a swimming pool and tennis court, and garaging for four vehicles.

We have written about this home in greater depth here.

Setting the Scene

The house is the only Wealden hall house in the village of Biddenden and is thought to date to 1419. Timber-framed with curved braces and brick and plaster infills, the house is set over two principal stories with steep-pitched, high-ceiling rooms above.

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King Prajadhipok of Siam (now Thailand), who reigned from 1925 until his abdication in 1935, lived here for some years, creating its ethereal water garden, the 'King's Pond' and the stone bridge that traverses it.

The Grand Tour

A private in-and-out driveway leads along the north side of the house from the quiet country road, arriving at a parking area for several vehicles, a carport and a variety of entrances along the northern elevation. The front elevation is unusually wide for the vernacular, although composed the traditional four bays. The design is double jettied at the outer bays with a central recessed portion with overhanging eaves.



The formal entrance is situated between the dining and sitting rooms and opens through an original pointed arched doorway, and an enormous timber front door. The entrance hall is open to the roof and contains one of the house's two staircases.

At the rear of the hall is an access point to the garden and doorways right and left to the formal drawing room and dining rooms respectively. The drawing room contains a log burner within an oak-framed inglenook and has a bank of oak-framed, lead-lattice glazed mullions that draw masses of southerly light into the room. The dining space occupies the former hall with original clay tiles underfoot and huge beams overhead. The space is arranged around a second large inglenook and open fireplace. A partially sunken area is used by the current owners as a quiet space for a writing desk. This room also has access to the rear terrace through a glazed doorway.

Beyond the dining room, towards the rear of the house, is the kitchen. This room too receives excellent southerly light through its French windows, which open directly onto the rear terrace. The kitchen is by Smallbone and composed of solid American walnut cabinetry and granite worktops. An oil-fired Aga is positioned centrally. Limestone floors with underfloor heating run underfoot. The house benefits from high-pressure mains and a recently renewed central heating system.

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A secondary entrance hall is positioned east of the kitchen for direct access from the parking. Across the hall is a boot room and utility and beyond the oak staircase is a family room which opens in turn to a wonderful loggia for outdoor dining.

Adjacent to the carport is an extended portion of the house. This has been constructed using sympathetic oak framing and oak flooring, and provides a versatile space to be used as a garden room, gym, studio, office space or guest wing. Glazed oak doors open fully to a south-facing terrace with far-reaching views across lawns and paddocks to woodland.

Four bedrooms are arranged across the first floor. The principle suite is positioned in the western corner, looking south through its leaded windows to the King's pond. It has an en-suite bathroom with a double sink, bath and separate shower. Across the courtyard is another large bedroom, also with an en suite bathroom and an adjacent room that could be used as a nursery or as a walk-in wardrobe.

The second floor takes on a dramatic role in the house with its steeply pitched vaulted ceilings and exposed beams. There are two further bedrooms on this floor. One of these upper-level rooms is the suite that used by King Prajadhikok and retains its splendid crown post and open fireplace.

The Great Outdoors

Vane Court is brilliantly situated in a tranquil part of the Weald. Its surroundings are incredibly bucolic, with paddocks, farmland and woodland to the east and south as far as the eye can see.

The immediate gardens are beautifully arranged with formal lawns at the front and back, a sunken rose garden and water garden containing the King's Pond and stone bridge.

The rear of the house is arranged with a series of courtyards and terraces orientated to capture the sun and offer a variety of spaces to entertain in most seasons. Beyond the terraces and lawns to the rear are two hedged enclosures containing a heated swimming pool and an all-weather tennis court.

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Out and About

Biddenden is a picturesque, thriving village, one of the most sought-after in the High Weald of Kent. Despite the scale and privacy of Vane Court, the village hub is a 30-minute walk away or a short three-minute drive and has a charming stretch of Flemish weavers' cottages lining the high street. Local amenities include the family-run bakehouse and West House restaurant, along with a village shop, post office and café. Several great country pubs are close to hand: the nearest being the award-winning The Three Chimneys, which is housed in a 600-year-old building.

Biddenden vineyard was the first in Kent and has been run by the same family for over 60 years. Gusbourne and Chapel Down vineyards are also a short twenty-minute drive away. The Sir Nick Faldo-designed golf course Chart Hills Golf Club is nearby, set among 200 acres of woodland and lakes.

The surrounding area has a multitude of historic landmarks. The magnificent Sissinghurst Castle is only four miles away with its famous gardens designed by Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson to be a series of 'rooms' including the rose and white gardens. Leeds Castle, which dates to the 11th century and is known for its tradition of being gifted to Queens throughout English history.

A mere six miles away is the charming historic town of Tenterden. Here, a wide high street separates lines of boutiques, artisan and antique shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes, as well as a large Waitrose. The area is well served by supermarkets and independent farm shops, including Hartley Coffee House and Farm Shop with a fine fishmonger, butchers, a bakery and a cafe.

A wide ranging selection of schools make for an enviable catchment area: Malborough House and St Ronan's in Hawkhurst, Sutton Valence, Cranbrook, Ashford, Homewood, Dulwich Prep and the internationally renowned Benenden Girls' School are all local.

To the south-east, and only 21 miles away, lie the beaches of Camber Sands, and the historic, bustling town of Rye, with its famous links golf course and vibrant selection of antique shops. Meanwhile, 20 miles north, the popular hub of Tunbridge Wells is conveniently placed with its plentiful restaurants, cafes, bars and shops.

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Central London can be reached by car in under two hours, and nearby Staplehurst station provides rail services to London Bridge, Waterloo and London Charing Cross in approximately one hour. Ashford International is around 25 minutes by car for even faster services to London St Pancras (approximately 35 minutes) and London Victoria. Gatwick (53 miles) and Heathrow (77 miles) airports are accessible via the M25, which is easily reached via the A21.

Council Tax Band: H

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About

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