

Japanese knotweed wiped £20,000 off value of our house

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A homeowner has had £20,000 wiped off the value of his house because a surveyor said it was threatened by knotweed growing behind his back yard.

Father-of-one Ben Metcalfe, 35 had put his terrace home in Stockport on the market at £100,000 and after two years of waiting, thought he had a buyer.



But the sale fell through at the last moment when a surveyor carried out an inspection on behalf of the prospective purchaser. His report found the house was worth only £80,000 because of a cluster of aggressive Japanese knotweed growing on council land next door.

The expert said the weed was a threat to the foundations of neighbouring properties and recommend a 'migration plan' to establish where the roots were, how fast the weed was growing and what direction it would grow in.

The bamboo-like plant can grow up to 12ft high, push through concrete and damage buildings. Eradicating it with pesticides costs £100 per square foot.

An embankment behind Mr Metcalfe's home is riddled with the weed, some of it already 10ft high.

Mr Metcalfe, an NHS support worker, and other locals have long complained about the danger the weed poses to nearby foundations.

He is unable to cut back the weed himself for fear he could be prosecuted for damaging property.

He said: 'We had fallen in love with a house and put an offer in but our sale fell through and we were left stranded.'

We had been planning to move for two or three years. It is unbelievably frustrating.

'It is clearly a real problem when someone can't get a mortgage because of weeds.'

I was told that if it didn't get sorted out then I would have to sell at auction, or find a cash buyer.

"There are a lot of lenders that simply won't offer a mortgage on a home that has knotweed nearby.

"When the survey came back, not only did it show up the knotweed, it said that for the sale to proceed there would have to be a full "migration plan" put together to chart where the plant was and how it was travelling.

'Of course the buyer got cold feet. We feel like we were left completely stuck in this position while we wait for the knotweed to be treated. We just have to hope we can find a buyer that is open minded.'

After contacting the local council, property management company NPS has agreed to treat the

knotweed for the first time in two years and will give Mr Metcalfe a certificate guaranteeing it will be kept in check for five years.

Local Labour councillor Philip Harding, who raised the case with Stockport Council, said 'It has been a problem there for ten years so I don't know why it has taken so long to deal with properly.'

Liberal Democrat councillor Mark Weldon, executive member for community services, attempted to reassure residents.

'We are committed to tackling this issue and have a comprehensive policy to address Japanese knotweed,' he said.

'We are aware of the residents' concerns and contact has been made with them.'

"This site was treated for Japanese knotweed a couple of years ago when it was brought to our attention.'

'There has recently been some re-growth which will be revisited.'

Photos supplied by Cavenish Press.