

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT & HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT THORRINGTON HALL

1.0 Introduction

This statement is written in support of a proposal to repair the timber frame to the property and the Jacobean Staircase within the stair tower.

2.0 Existing Building



Drone photo of Thorington Hall viewed from the South West with the western stair tower bounded in red.

Thorington Hall is owned by the National Trust and operates as a Holiday Let and has done so from 2014.

Thorington Hall is grade 2* listed building. Its listing description reads as follows:

“THORINGTON STREET 1. 5377 Stoke-by-Nayland Thorington Hall (formerly listed as Thorington Hall with barn and outbuildings opposite the house) TM 0135 25/908 10.1.53. II GV*

2. A fine C17 timber-framed and plastered house with much original detail. There are cross wings at the north-east and south-west ends and a staircase wing rises to above eaves level on the south-east front. The north-east wing has a jettied gable on both fronts, carved bressummer and bargeboards. The south-west wing has an oriel window on the upper storey on the north-west side, on 4 shaped brackets. There is also a jettied gable with carved bressummer and bargeboards. The windows are mostly mullioned and transomed casements with leaded lights, some with C17 fastenings. There are some original windows, blocked. On the south-east front there is a modern glazed door with a C18 doorcase with a scroll pediment on brackets. Roofs tiled (old tiles), mostly gabled but some hipped. There are 2 heavy chimney stacks, one particularly fine with 6 grouped octagonal shafts with spurred caps and moulded bases. The interior has many good C17 features including an early C17 staircase with turned balusters and newel posts with carved finials and pendants. There is also a good C17-C18 staircase, C17 fireplaces and casement fittings.”

Thornington Hall, Thornington Street	1200597	Grade II*
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<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1200597?section=official-list-entry>

It is recorded in the May 2010 Suffolk Magazine that

“ There is evidence of an earlier building, perhaps a medieval hall, a little to the west. One room from this period survives within the house. The structure of the rest of the house belongs to two periods. The western wing and hall, with its star-topped, sixstack chimney soaring up about 40 courses, and its rich barge boards, was built in the late 16th or very early 17th century. ... The eastern wing was added in the late 17th century, with a scroll-pedimented doorway on the south front. Very little of the ornate plasterwork which embellished the outside of the house remains visible, although you can see some above this south door as you look up towards the chimney.”

The book ‘Suffolk Houses’ by Eric Sandon FRIBA discusses Thornington Hall

“The River Box flows south within thirty yards of Thornington Hall, which stands at a junction of the Stoke-by-Nayland/Higham road with a by-road going north to Withermarsh Green. It is the Hall house of a roadside hamlet known as Thornington Street, and, built so close to the corner, is the most conspicuous feature of this tiny settlement. Its earlier character of a working farmhouse has been subtly lost in the subsequent restoration in spite of the obvious gain in architectural quality (see Plate 316).

Both plan and structure suggest that originally the house may have been of smaller and less pretentious proportions, possibly of T-plan, with a central range and a single cross-wing at the west end. Whether this is so can probably be determined only by an exact study of the carpentry within the roof and elsewhere, but there can be little doubt that the first build was in the late Elizabethan period, say 1590. Without recourse to carpentry study, this is suggested by stylistic details- notably the barge-boards and bay window on the north elevation, and the immensely tall star-topped chimneys. The four-light bay window, with its canted side-lights and adjoining three-light mullion windows at high level is extraordinarily close in design to the fenestration on the Lady Street elevation of the Guildhall at Lavenham; the arched brackets and the buttresses, however, have gone, and the solid moulded sill member replaced by four small moulded sub-sill brackets of incipient Renaissance design, replicas of which appear beneath the ends of the projecting wall plates where these engage with the barge-boards. The latter have a very Gothic double-billet moulding, repeated on the bressumer, beneath the projection of which the bay window was neatly fitted. The massed groups of stacks, three to each side, making a six shafted chimney with moulded octagonal bases and elaborate star-tops, is a feature of East Anglian brickwork with roots deep in Perpendicular architecture (see Plate 317). A croissonné mullion and transom window immediately below the first-floor bay window is a reminder of the changes that must have taken place in the early to middle period of the next century.*

One plausible explanation of the next phase at Thornington Hall would be a change of ownership about the time of 1610-20, when the old stairs - which could have been of the ladder pattern - were taken out and the case built out on the south-east side to enclose a new stairway. This superbly designed multi-flight staircase, with its beautiful carved newel posts has already been illustrated (see Plate 122).

The next substantial changes would have taken place at the end of the seventeenth century, to which period (c.1690) must be attributed the second staircase in a hall entered from the south, and in a wing which invites speculation on account of different proportions. This, although timber-framed and plastered like the rest, is unlikely to be contemporaneous owing to a different roofing system at a higher level than the range to the west. It is where this wing joins the conjecturally earlier work that occurs the elaborate classical doorcase with its scroll-pedimented head, which, in turn, is practically opposite the brick gate piers with ball caps set in the brick boundary wall on the roadside, and presumably of the same period. These details together pose the possibility that this part of Thornington Hall was an addition intended to give a 'classical' end to the house, a proposal strengthened by the plain axial chimney stack of the eastern cross-wing.”

‘Suffolk Houses’ goes on to specifically highlight the Jacobean staircase as follows

“One of the prettiest and - decoratively - most original open well early-Jacobean stairways is at Thornington Hall, near Stoke-by-Nayland (see Plate 122). This has closed strings on the outside and, presumably, an open cut string on the inside: the stairway is housed in the traditional case, and rises through three floors.”

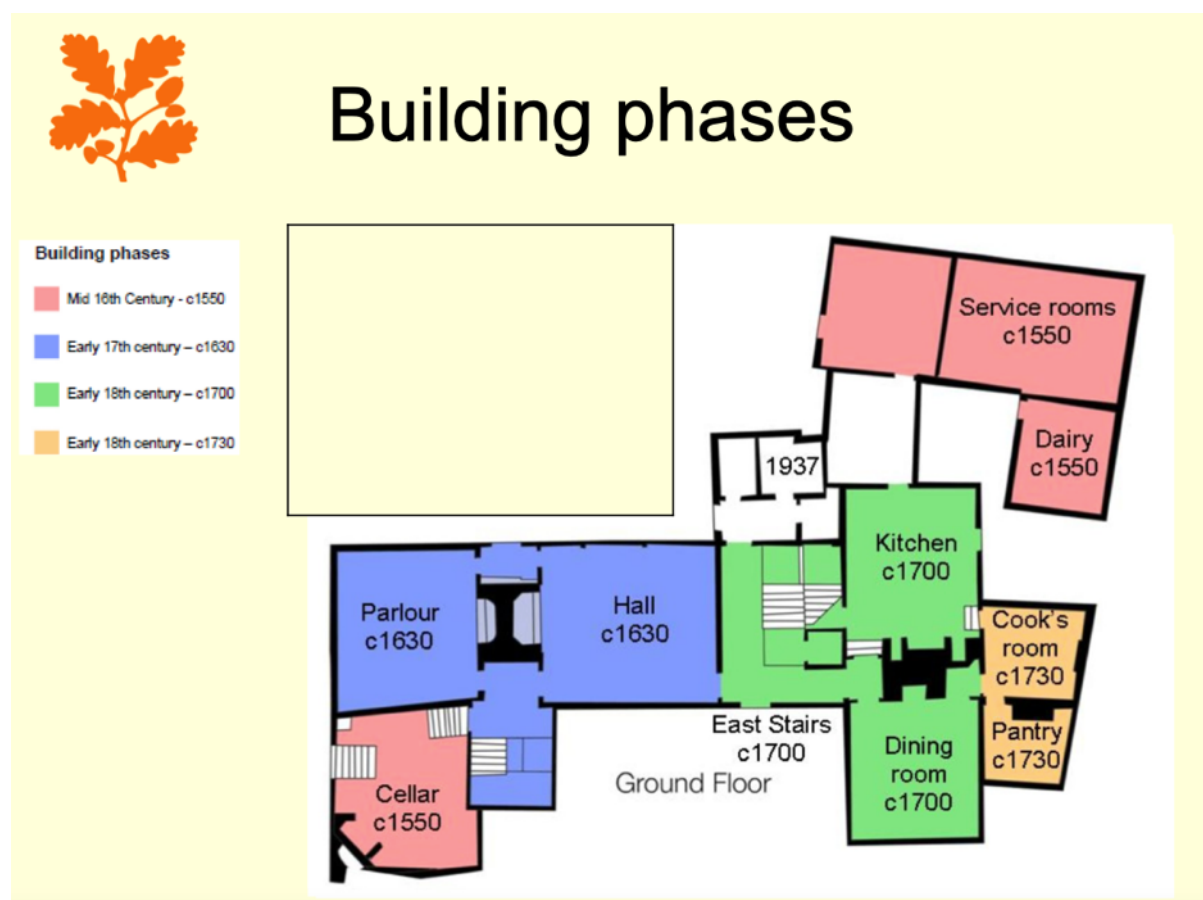
The stair is understood to have been installed during the tenure of Thomas May, a poet, who lived in the house during a period of the early 1600s till his death in 1645. His descendants sold the house in 1700 to Bedingfield Heighman, a London merchant.

Heighman's daughter Hester inherited the house who added to the properties East wing. The hall was then left to Thomas White, her uncle and was later sold to Sir Rowley in 1764.

For the next 147 years (up to 1911) the house was let to tenant farmers and over this time the house fell into a poor state of repair.

The house was given to the National Trust in 1940 by Professor Lionel Penrose, although his family continued to live in the house until 1973. It was Professor Penrose who restored the building after 1937, by which time the house had fallen into a state of disrepair.

The area of the property in question affected by the works is understood to date from c. 1630.



Evolution of the house, taken from a National Trust Presentation.

The house underwent a full refurbishment from 1937 and from investigation it is apparent that at this time the work would have seen changes to the fabric.

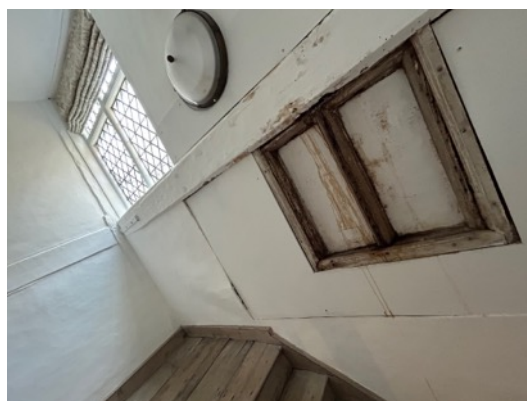


An image of the houses, Northern face undergoing renovation in 1937. Whilst a photo of the South elevation is not available, this demonstrates the level of work being undertaken at the time.

Drawing 6892/21-09 shows the existing timber frame make up to the stair tower. The external face of the frame is clad in polythene sheeting and expanded metal lath, there is then a cement render applied, externally.



Stair viewed at ground floor level



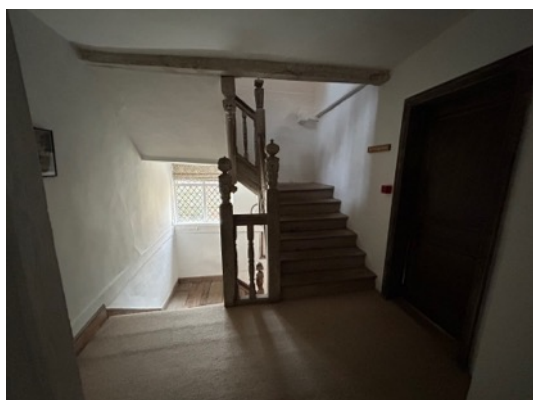
WG1 (left) and WG3



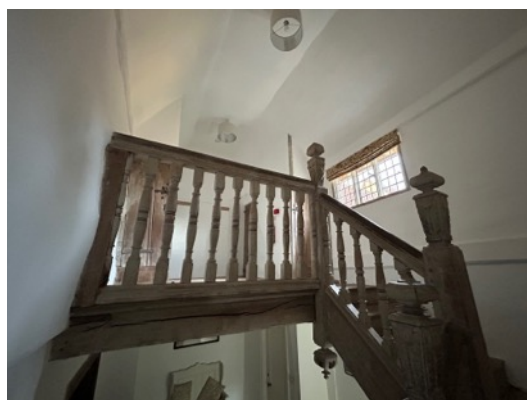
Stair viewed from ground floor half landing



Stair viewed from 2nd floor.



Stair viewed from 2nd floor.



Stair viewed from 1st floor half landing.



Stair tower viewed from south east



WG1 and gutter overflow above.

3.0 Proposals

The Proposals are for three elements of work:

1. Timber Frame Repairs & Re-Rendering.
2. Reinstatement of Window.
3. Strengthening Works to the Staircase.

3.1 Appearance & Materials

The overall form will be unaltered. The only external change to the appearance of the building will be the addition of the window, which as evidenced internally has previously been covered over externally but its form remains present internally.

The proposed render colour is to match the existing.

Materials are to be as set out in the schedule of works.

3.2 Use

Thorrington Hall is currently used as a holiday let by the National Trust on short term holiday lets as part of the National Trusts wider holiday lets offering.

3.3 Scale, Amount & Layout

There is no proposal to alter the scale, amount or layout of the house.

3.4 Access

Access to the property in terms of vehicular and pedestrian access will be unaffected

Access in and around the Hall will be unchanged by the works.

3.5 Landscaping

There is no landscaping works proposed with this application.

3.6 Consultation

The nature of the works have been briefly discussed with Tegan Chenery and it was agreed to submit an application.

4.0 Justification

Three items of work have been identified as requiring attention and they form part of this application.

1. Timber Frame Repairs & Re-Rendering.
2. Reinstatement of Window.
3. Strengthening Works to the Staircase.

In all instances the exact nature of the work is described within the drawings and schedule of work.

Handling each item in turn.

1. Timber Frame Repairs & Re-Rendering.

It is apparent from an internal visual inspection that the timber frame was subject to water ingress in the specific area highlighted by this application. Furthermore, an external examination identifies cement render to the elevation. This has resulted in the need to examine and repair the timber frame. A small amount of plaster was removed to further examine the frame and the rotten timber was identified.

The proposal therefore is to renew rotten timber in a like for like fashion. This is highlighted on the proposed repair elevations. Further possible repairs, the need for which are yet to be established are also highlighted.

The typical detailing and extent of the repair is shown on the application drawings.

It is known that the external render is cement based, and therefore this and the incongruous underlying substrates are to be removed. These will then be refinished in lath and plaster externally, and finished with a limewash decorative coating.

It has been proposed to re-render the entire elevation, as opposed to just an area affected by the works to the timber frame. This will remove all cement from this particular elevation and ensure that the whole timber frame to this elevation of the staircase can properly perform, which in turn will further preserve the staircase and its environment.

It is believed that water ingress into the render is in part due to an unsuitably detailed water outlet at the top of the elevation, for modern rainfall capacity and a lack of rainwater goods generally.

Therefore coupled with the render renewal. The lead valley outlet will be reformed and new rainwater goods will be installed to the roof slopes above. This will ensure that in the future rain is directed away from the elevation rather than the current arrangement, which allows water to directly run down the elevation and into any movement cracks or openings.

2. Reinstatement of Window.



This window is highlighted on the plans as WG3. It is around this window where the water ingress is at its most apparent, and with regret, the remaining window frame is in a poor condition and beyond a reasonable state of repair.

The stair and stairwell suffer from a lack of ventilation. There is one window on the ground/first floor landing and one at second floor level. The second floor window is the only operable window and as a result, there is very little airflow within this space. The reinstatement of the window will reinstate a historic feature, which is clearly visible and clearly framed out within a structure. It will also provide a practical benefit in respect of maintaining a more reasonable environment to the stairwell. By reinstating the window, there will be no loss of quality historic fabric, as the frame is not salvageable.

The new window will replicate the detailing of the existing framing in situ, and the new window will be a metal casement, set within the oak frame, as other windows to the property.

The detailing of the window can be seen within the drawn details.

3. Strengthening Works to the Staircase.

The staircase has been assessed and the repairs put together by Alan Wright and accredited conservation engineer of Wright Consulting. A summary of his findings in respect of the staircase read as follows:

“The West staircase is suffering as a consequence of water ingress in the South Elevation walls due to under-sized gutters and poor detailing of the valley to the South gabled elevation in the South West corner of the property. As discussed there are several areas where water ingress has been ongoing within the semi-basement area at the West end of the property as well as through the external walls to the South and West of the staircase. As a consequence of this the staircase has rotated in a southerly direction leading to the disconnection and splitting of the principle floor beams to the landings.”

The staircase is an important part of the buildings, historical fabric, interest, and general evolution, and as such the repairs to the stair are considered to be critical.

The proposals are to allow for temporary propping of the staircase, whilst new bolts are fitted through the stair to arrest the ongoing movement.

For photos of the repair see engineer markups.

4.1 Heritage Impact

The proposed works are all considered necessary to rectify existing issues and minimise their future impact and the ongoing deterioration of the fabric and listed building. The detailing of the repairs and the overall scope of work has carefully considered the Significance of the building and its fabric.

it is considered that the works are important to the buildings, longevity and to the benefit of Thorrington Hall.