

The structural development
of
NUNHIDE MANOR
SULHAM, BERKSHIRE



K A Rodwell
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Introduction

Nunhide Manor is a grade II listed farmhouse in the parish of Sulham, Berkshire. This report outlines the structural development of the house and was commissioned to inform an application for planning and listed building consent to make alterations to the building. The drawings used as a basis for the survey (Figs 1-3) are by Access Architects.

Sulham is a small rural parish to the west of Reading with a church and a hamlet at its centre. Nunhide Farm stands in isolation about 1m to the south of the church and the M4 motorway now passes less than ¼ m to the west. The farm occupies the site of a Domesday manor which in the 16th century was rented by the Wilder family. In 1602 it was leased for the term of their lives to Thomas, Margaret and John Wilder and in 1632 Thomas Wilder and his son John bought the estate, which has remained in the family ever since (VCH 1923, 428-30). The family also acquired the manor of Sulham and successive Wilders were rectors of the parish in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century (TSPP 2008, 7).

Nunhide remains part of the Sulham estate and the farm is shown on a large estate map of 1839 in the estate office. There is also a framed photograph of 1886 which shows that the appearance of the house has undergone very little alteration since the late 19th century; Fig 1 shows the Ordnance Survey map of 1912.

Description

Exterior (Figs 2-4)

The house is built of brick with a hipped tiled roof and consists of a double-pile main range with a narrower lower service wing at the north end. The principal elevation faces west and has two distinct builds under a common roofline. The southern half is built of red brick in Flemish bond with wide lime mortar joints; it has a plinth and a dentilled eaves course. There are two pairs of twelve-light sash windows with segmentally arched heads and narrow glazing bars.

At the mid point of the wall there is a lead downpipe with the initials IE and the date 1698 on the hopper. This obscures a vertical straight joint; the brickwork to the south projects by c.50mm from the wall to the north which has a plinth largely faced in flint incorporating a cellar with two basement windows in brick light-wells. The body of this wall is also Flemish bond brickwork but they are thinner, the headers are vitrified and there is a three-course string at storey height. There is a single central triple-sash window on each floor, each of twelve lights flanked by four-pane side-lights with segmental heads; the wall below the first floor window is rebuilt. There are two rebuilt dormers in the roof and shouldered end stacks.

The south elevation is a blank brick wall in the same bond as the south end of the west wall with a near-central door covered by a 20th century brick porch. This has a hipped roof and is open to the west with casement windows in the other elevations. The door is six-panelled, the top four glazed, and has a fanlight with cast iron scrolled tracery.

The east elevation is cut into the slope and is also of two builds with a central straight joint; the wall to the north is out of true. The south end is built of a duller brick including vitrified headers and has a single pair of sash windows like those on the west side. To the north a third window of the same type at an intermediate height lights the staircase. The north end of the elevation matches the build on the west side; it has a single basement window in a 20th century light well, a pair of casement windows with arched heads on the ground floor and a triple sash window on the first floor.

The north elevation has a large projecting central stack and the string course continues from the west elevation. To the west there is a sealed part-glazed door with a flat wooden canopy and an inserted sash window on the first floor and to the east it is abutted by the service wing; there is the remnant of a projecting oven in the gap between the ranges.

The service range is a later build than the main range, of two low storeys with a gabled end wall containing a stack built of brick in a mixed bond with a clay tiled roof. The door and ground floor window on the west elevation have arched heads with a plain four-light casement above; these have leaded lights. There is another casement

on the ground floor of the east elevation. Butted onto the north end is a single-storey outbuilding with a Welsh slate roof, casement windows and boarded doors.

Interior

Ground floor (Figs 2, 5-6)

The ground floor is bisected by an axial passage from the external door at the south end to the kitchen in the service wing to the north. West of the passage are the two principal reception rooms; to the east there are a smaller reception room, the staircase hall, a cloakroom and a former pantry. The southern end of the passage has a coved cornice and there is a panelled 18th century archway to the stair hall.

The south-west reception room has full-height oak panelling in two zones divided by a dado moulding. The panels are raised and fielded with outer bolection mouldings of early 18th century type. The door is *en suite* and there are false double doors in the east and north walls (the north door has a lock but no hinges and there is no evidence for blocked openings on the reverse). The fireplace in the south wall is early 20th century brick with a reproduction early 18th century surround; this has an eared architrave and oversize foliate carving. There are swags in the same style flanking a raised overmantel panel with an egg and dart border. The paired sash windows have window seats. Panels have been removed on this wall and on the side of the chimney breast exposing the underlying brick walls; the wood is thin and regularly-sawn suggesting that they are reproduction. The floor is late 19th or 20th century boarding, decayed in places and there is a plain plaster ceiling.

The south-east reception room is fully fitted out with raised and fielded panelling comprising skirting, dado, upper panel, frieze and cornice moulding. The door, window and fireplace are integrated into the scheme. The fireplace opening has white marble slips and a moulded mantelshelf with a raised panel above. Nineteenth century cupboards have been built into the recesses on either side over the original panelling which survives at the back. A paint scrape indicates that this panelling has had a succession of painted and grained finishes. The door is hung on mismatched L-hinges and has bolection mouldings on the reverse. The floor is 19th century boards affected by damp and the ceiling plain plaster, missing in places to expose 19th century joists.

The staircase at right angles to the passage is of 18th century dog-leg type with a closed string, toad's-back handrail, turned newels and turned vase-shaped balusters. There is a dado moulding on the wall side with pilasters on the half-landing and a contemporary two-panelled under-stair cupboard door.

The main door to the north-west reception room is six-panelled with a pilastered architrave and an arched over-door. It is set in an exposed timber-framed partition with a cill beam and top rail and there is a second plainer door at the north end. The other three walls are plastered over brick and a patch has been stripped in the south-west corner to expose a void 50mm deep where the south wall is butted against the west wall. The west window appears inserted; it has shutters and the architrave projects 150mm from the wall face. The fireplace in the north wall was rebuilt in the earlier 20th century within an earlier opening to incorporate inglenook seats, a flat brick arch held on an iron bar and an alcove where there was formerly an oven. It is framed by applied timbers and there is an arched recess, probably old, above a high mantelshelf. To the west a door has been partially blocked to make a window and to the east there are cupboards; these are both 19th century features. The ceiling has a grid of exposed beams and joists; a number of these are replacements. The floor is 19th century boards.

North of the staircase hall and at a higher level is a cloakroom with a timber-framed south wall. This has a cill beam set on a dwarf wall and two posts; the western is tenoned into a rail below ceiling level; the eastern is full height and the rail is tenoned into it. The soffit of the rail has a series of dowels for wattles. There is a second rail, also morticed for a post in the north wall. The door is of 17th century panelled type but has been rehung as the narrow frieze zone is at the base; it has cockshead hinges and a wooden latch. In the adjoining passage the reverse of the framing to the north-west room is exposed. It is set on a dwarf wall and there is a full-height post at the north end.

The north-east room is a pantry with a 19th century boarded door. Round the north and part of the east wall is a series of brick arches supporting a tiled counter. Above this on the north wall there are two old wooden shelves. The floor is also tiled and there is a rough late 19th/20th century staircase to the cellar which underlies the

northern half of the house. It is brick-built and the western half has shallow twin vaults.

The kitchen in the north wing has a fireplace in the north wall with a 20th century range; an oven in the room to the north backs onto this. It has crossed chamfered ceiling beams and a woodblock floor. There is a staircase to the first floor which is ceiled and has a small fireplace. The elm roof truss is of queen-post type and there is a ridge-board. The formerly external wall of the main house with string course and dentilled eaves course is visible in the roof space. The outbuilding at the end is single-storeyed and open to the roof which has a truss with a jowled king post and edge-set purlins.

First floor (Figs 2, 7-8)

Four rooms open off the first floor landing; the room to the south-west has a 19th century boarded floor on older joists with chisel-cut carpenters' marks. There is a moulded skirting and matching dado rail and the paired windows have fielded shutters. The door has two bolection moulded panels like those downstairs. The walls are plastered (probably on battens) and the fireplace has a large marble hearth slab and white marble slips to an early 19th century cast iron grate. The wooden frame and overmantel are in later 18th century Adam style with swags and urns below the dentilled mantelshelf. On the chimney breast there is a panel with a raised plaster edge-moulding. There is a moulded plaster cornice with bands of egg and dart and anthemions, heavily overpainted. In the centre of the ceiling is a painted and embossed back-board for a chandelier which appears to be later; heavy curtain poles in similar style are mounted over the windows.

The north-west room has windows in the north and west walls, both shuttered. The partition wall is studwork covered with hessian and papered; traces of old wallpapers survive where this has been opened up. The west wall is battened out over the brickwork and is also hessian covered. The fireplace is of late 19th century cast iron type with floral tiled insets; there is a bold 18th century box cornice and the two panelled door is bolection-moulded.

The adjoining north-east bedroom has a similar door hung on old H-hinges. There is a deep dado rail and cornice moulding and a corner fireplace. This has a 20th century grate in an early 18th century surround with pulvinated frieze and moulded mantelshelf surmounted by a bolection moulded panel. In the south wall adjoining the door is a deep bed recess defined by a wide segmental arch with pilasters and a key block integrated with the cornice which continues round the alcove. There is a blocked window recess in the north wall and the existing east window is a later insertion.

The smaller south-east room, latterly a bathroom has a high narrow dado rail, a plastered cornice and plastered walls. There is an 18th century fireplace with marble slips in a simple wooden surround with a moulded mantelshelf. The window has plain panelled shutters and there is a two-panelled door.

Top floor (Figs 2, 8)

The upper flight of the staircase from the first floor to the attics and the handrail on the top floor landing match the lower flight and are complete. There are four rooms at attic level, all plainly finished with 19th century boarded floors and lit by dormers. The south-east room has a boarded door; the doorway to the south-west room incorporates reused 17th cent panelling. The north-west room has an internal gutter running obliquely across the south wall and the roof structure in this and the adjoining north-east room is partially exposed. The timbers form elements of an east-west roof over the northern half of the house which antedates the double-pile common rafter roof over the southern half of the house; this runs at right angles.

Structural development (Figs 2-3)

The house is unmodernised and has undergone only limited alteration in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries. As a consequence a number of the rooms have good quality, well-preserved 18th century features.

1 *17th century or earlier* - the earliest phase of the house was timber-framed; three of the internal partition walls in the northern half of the building have exposed posts and rails tenoned into cill beams set on rubble dwarf walls. At least two of these timbers were main posts which would originally have extended the full height of the

building, although no framing is currently visible on the first floor. Not enough is exposed to be certain about the form of the building or to date the framing closely but it is 17th century or earlier. The cloakroom on the ground floor has a reset 17th century panelled door and there is further reused panelling of this date in the attic.

2 *1698* – this date on a lead hopper probably commemorates the rebuilding of the house in brick. This was confined to the northern half of the present building where all three of the external walls are the same build, characterised by regular vitrified headers and a string course. There are straight joints with the later walling to the south and the chimney stack on the north side is integral, however the principal window openings appear to be later 18th century alterations. Internally the roof structure at the north end of the house dates to this phase but other features such as the panelling in the north-east bedroom probably belong to the next phase.

3 *first half of the 18th century* – at this time the house was extended southwards to create the existing double-pile plan. The sash windows in the east and west walls are contemporary but the front door was in the otherwise blank south wall. This range has a fine and complete early 18th century staircase and there is a fully panelled small reception room to the south which is also original. The large south-west reception room panelled in a similar style appears to have been restored in the earlier 20th century; where opening up has taken place some of the panels are clearly of this date and so is the fireplace surround. The double doors in the north and east walls appear to be false as one has no hinges and there is no evidence of blocked openings behind. The service rooms were in the older northern half of the house. All the bedrooms on the first floor have 18th century features. The most elaborate, probably dating to this phase is the north-east room which was a good quality bedroom with an arched bed recess (cf Cruikshank & Burton, 1990, 72).

4 *late 18th century* – the south-west bedroom has fittings of later 18th century date including an Adam-style fireplace and a moulded plaster cornice. The triple sash windows in the northern half of the house were probably also inserted at this time. Contemporary with this phase or possibly slightly later are the cellars under the north end of the house and the kitchen wing to the north, which is an addition to the main house.

5 *19th century* – few alterations were made at this time, principally the construction of the outbuilding attached to the kitchen. There is also a later 19th century tiled fireplace surround in the north-west bedroom and cupboards in some other rooms.

6 *earlier 20th century* – the south porch was added at this time and internal repairs took place, most of the floorboards and some joists are of this date. The main ground floor reception rooms were renovated and the present configuration of the panelling and fireplace in the south-west room dates to this time. In the north-west room the fireplace was restored and timber-framing in the walls and ceiling exposed; a number of the joists are replacements of this date.

References

- Cruikshank, D & Burton, N, 1990 *Life in the Georgian City*, Viking
TSPP 2008, *Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Plan*, Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council
VCH 1923 *Victoria History of the counties of England: Berkshire*, 3

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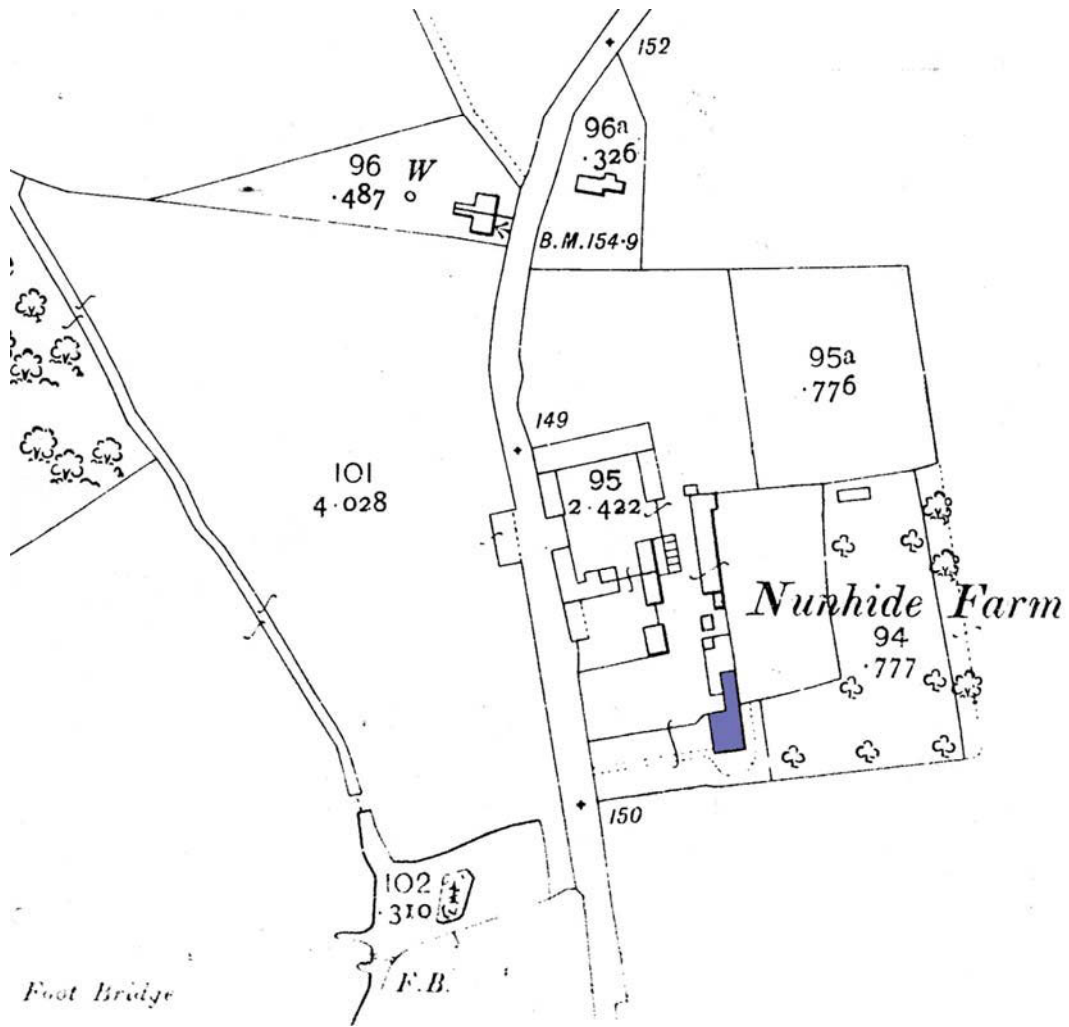


Fig 1

Ordnance Survey map 1912

Site plan (house shaded)

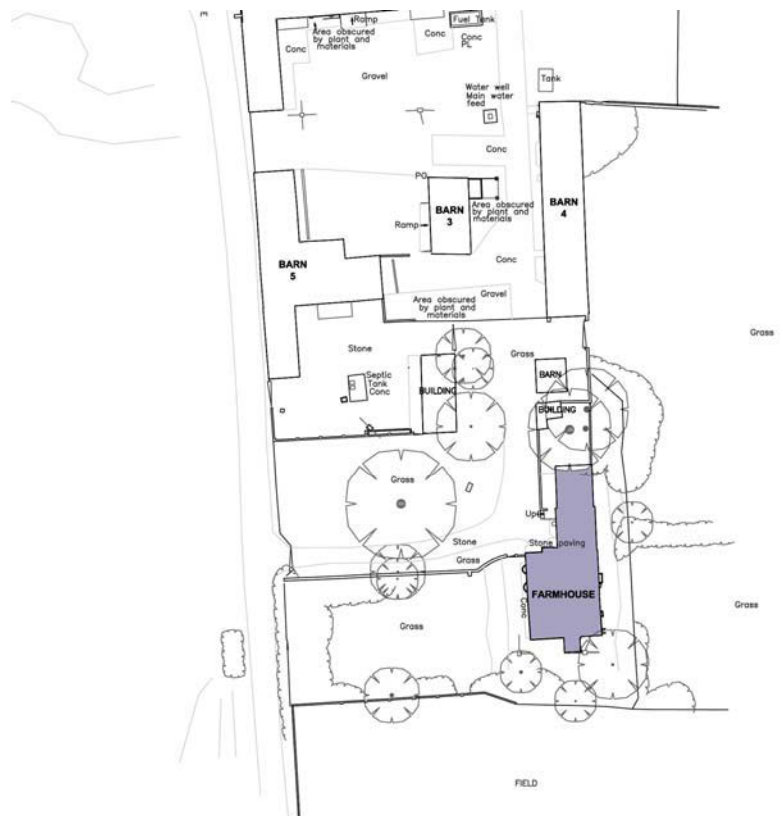


Fig 2 Plans

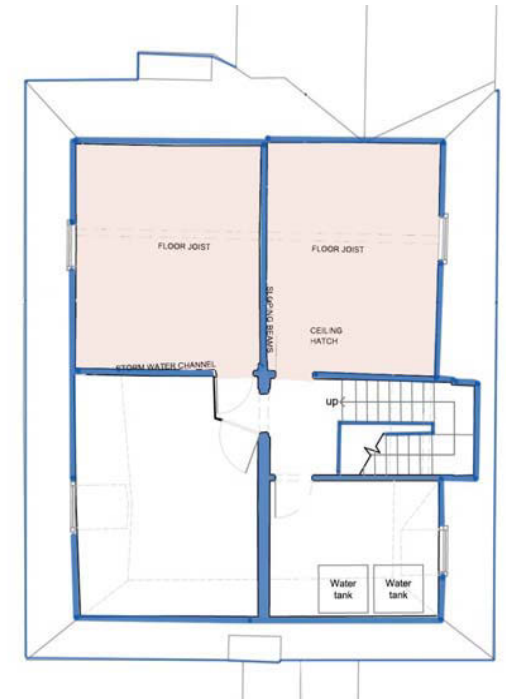
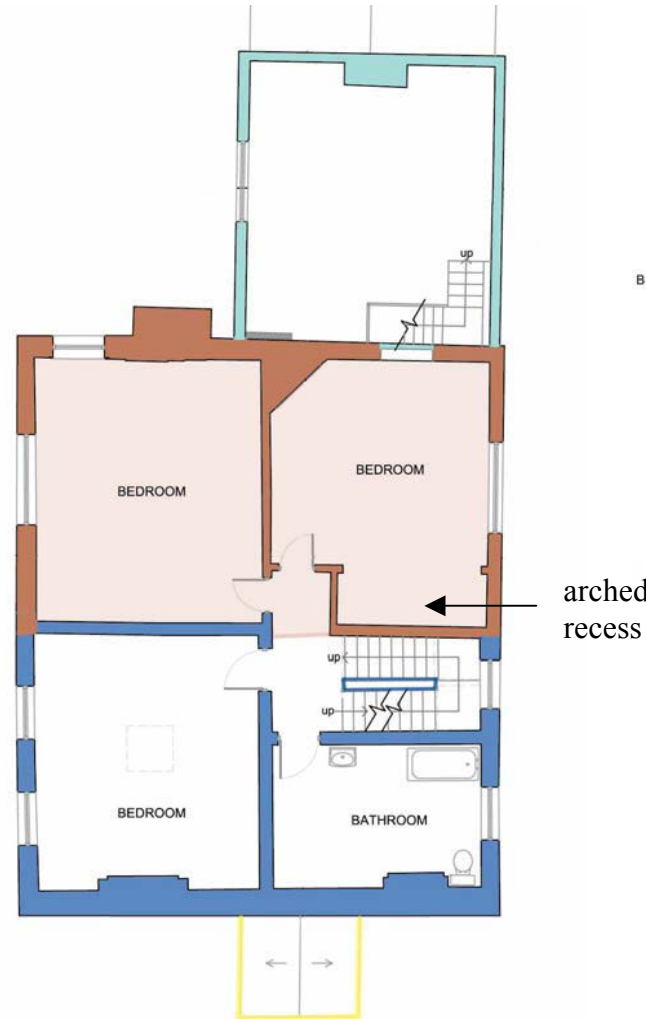
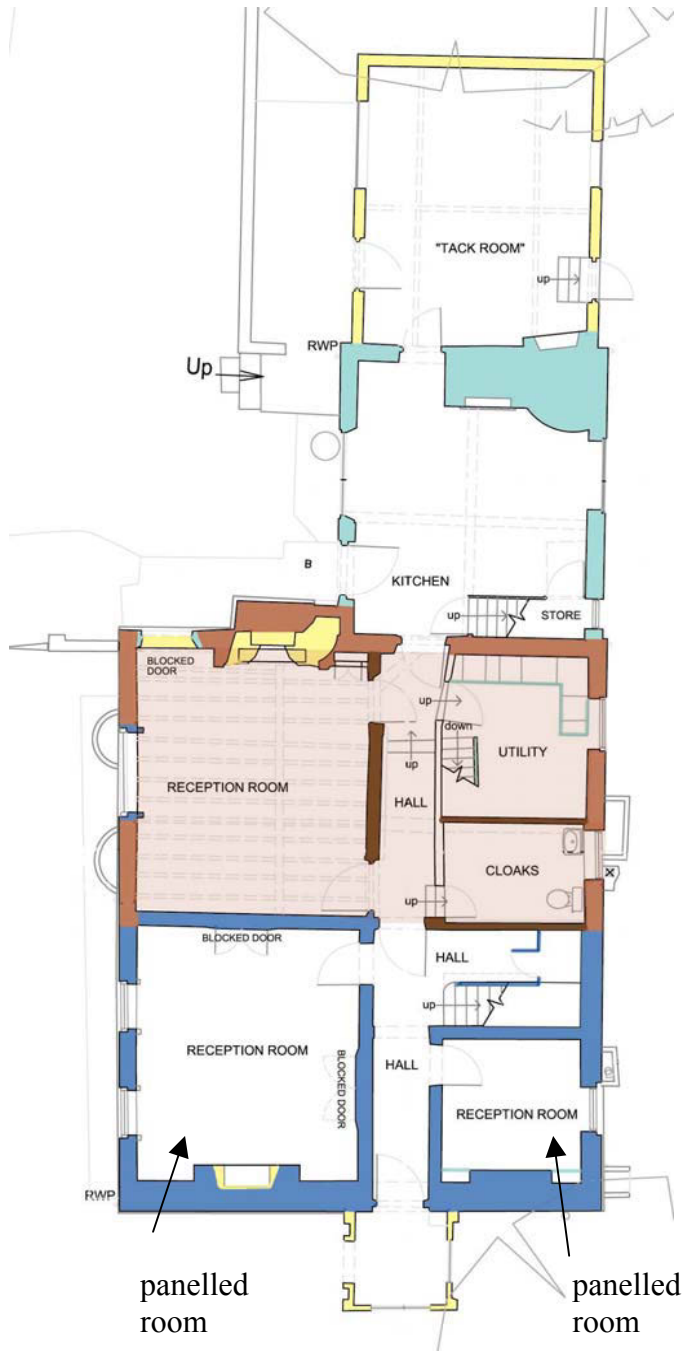
Nunhide Manor, Sulham, Berks

Ground floor

First floor

Top floor

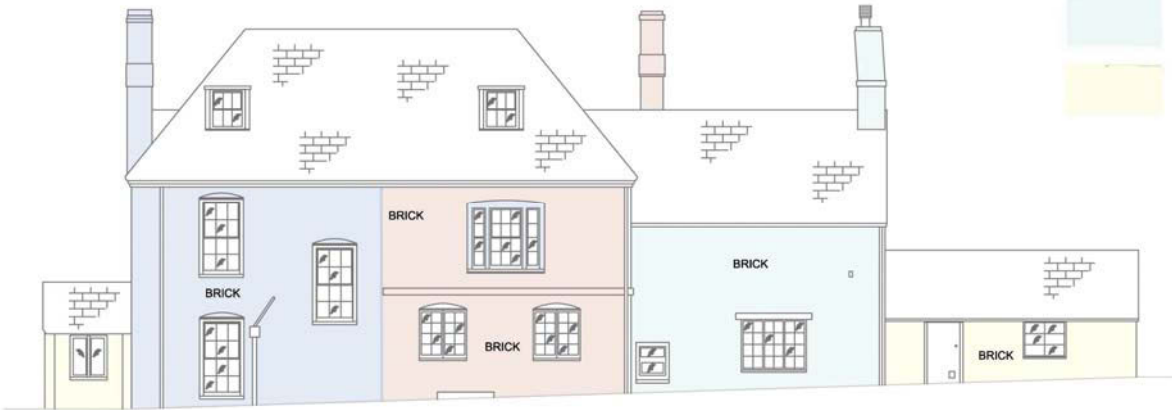
-  timber framing
-  c.1700
-  house extent c.1700
-  earlier 18th century
-  c.1800
-  later 19th & 20th cent





Farmhouse
Existing West Elevation

- c.1700
- earlier 18th century
- c.1800
- later 19th & 20th cent



Farmhouse
Existing East Elevation

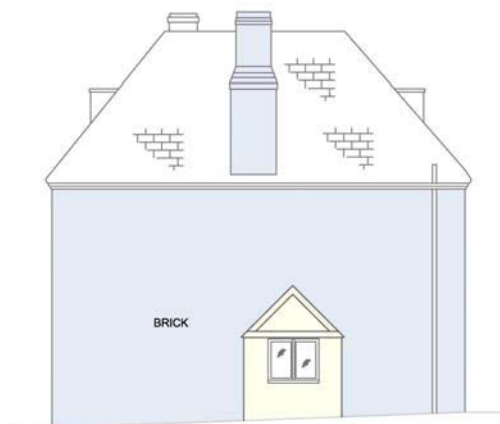
Fig 3 Elevations

West

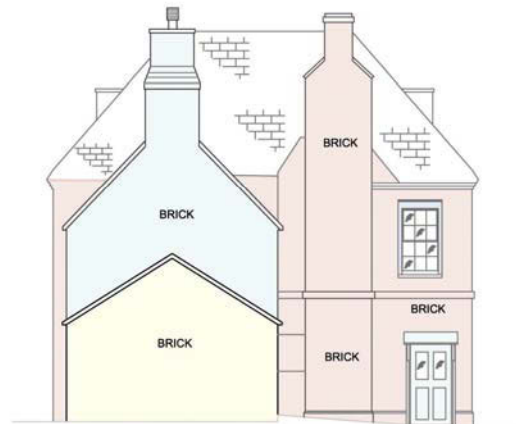
East

South

North



Farmhouse
Existing South Elevation



Farmhouse
Existing North Elevation



Fig 4

(clockwise from above)

West elevation; junction in builds behind
downpipe

North end showing service wing

Porch at south end

East elevation from north

East elevation from south

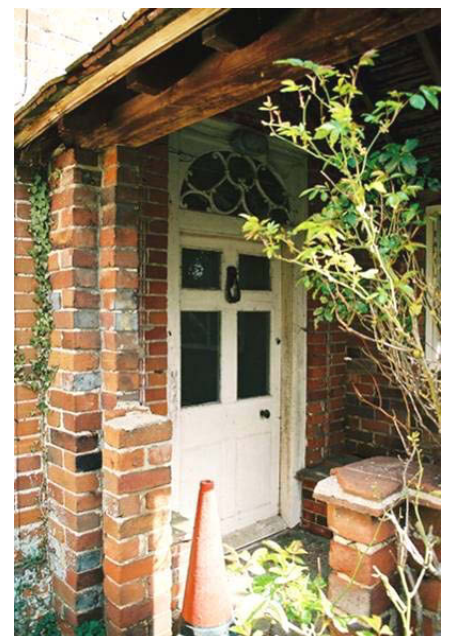




Fig 5

(clockwise from above)

SW reception room; panelling

SW reception room; early 20th century fireplace

Timber framing on west side of passage

Hall looking south; 18th century

Timber framing in NW reception room

Open fireplace in NW reception room, altered in early 20th cent





Fig 6

(clockwise from top right)

SE reception room; early 18th century fireplace, panelling, & 19th cent cupboards

Pantry, NE ground floor

Cellar under NW ground floor

Timber-framing in cloakroom

SE reception room; early 18th century panelling





Fig 7
(clockwise from left)

Ground floor; early 18th cent staircase

Staircase from first floor

NE bedroom; keyblock & cornice detail

NE bedroom; early 18th cent arched recess

NE bedroom: early 18th cent corner fireplace (C20 grate)

Staircase; top floor landing





Fig 8

(clockwise from above)

North-west bedroom

Internal gutter in north-west attic room

Junction of older E-W and later N-S roofs

South-east bedroom; 18th century features

North-west bedroom; old wallpaper behind hessian

Later 18th century fireplace in south-west bedroom

