



**Walnut Tree Farmhouse
Luffenhall
Hertfordshire**



Heritage Statement

July 2024

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1.0 Introduction

In April 2024 BEAMS Ltd conducted an appraisal of the grade II listed Walnut Tree Farmhouse, Luffenhall on behalf of the owner.

The appraisal is to accompany an application for replacing the existing windows with like-for-like versions incorporating slim profile double glazed units.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, S.16 (2), requires the local planning authority, in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 includes government policies on the conservation of the historic environment, and paragraph 200 declares that:-

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

This statement seeks to enable an informed decision to be made about listed building consent, as prescribed by the 1990 Act, and to fulfil the requirements of the NPPF 2023.

1.1 Location and site description

Walnut Tree Farm is located to the south of the small hamlet of Luffenhall on a country lane known as Luffenhall Street, leading south to the junction of the B1037 just to the south of the village of Cromer. Luffenhall is approximately six miles north-east of Stevenage. The farm lies on the western valley slope of the River Beane which runs parallel to Luffenhall Street in this location. The site is in the parish of Clothall and the district of North Hertfordshire.

The farmhouse is set back from the road behind a steep circular driveway with a twentieth century single storey farm building on the north side running down to the road. To the south and west are gardens rising up the valley slope.

Walnut Tree Farmhouse was added to the statutory list (list entry no. 1175895) on 26th May 1968, the statutory list description can be found in Appendix 1. The site is located at TL 2926328494.



Figure 1. Site Plan (courtesy of Hertford Planning Service)

2.0 Historic Background

The hamlet of Luffenhall is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, at this date the manor of Luffenhall was held by The Dean and Chapter of St Paul's alongside the manor of Ardeley. Luffenhall is in fact still divided between the parishes of Clothall and Arderley, although Walnut Tree Farm is in the parish of Clothall. The Victoria County History (1912) describes the parish of Clothall as a “district of scattered farms and farmsteads” which perfectly describes the character of Luffenhall and its farms strung along Luffenhall Street.

Walnut Tree Farm was built ca. 1500 as an open hall house with service rooms to the north and a two-storey cross wing on its south end. In the seventeenth century a floor, staircase and stack were inserted into the hall range. The HER record states that a two-storey bay was added at the north end, possibly a dairy and room above. However, the RCHME (1993) volume asserts that this was the service end with a stair in its original position. In circa 1700 a rear wing was added. The hall chimney stack was rebuilt in the nineteenth century.

The first clear map record of Walnut Tree Farm is the 1842 Clothall tithe map (Fig. 2). The house at this date was flanked on both sides by outbuildings running down to the road, now only a modern rebuild of the northern range survives. Subsequent historic maps show little change to the planform of the property (Figs. 3 – 5).

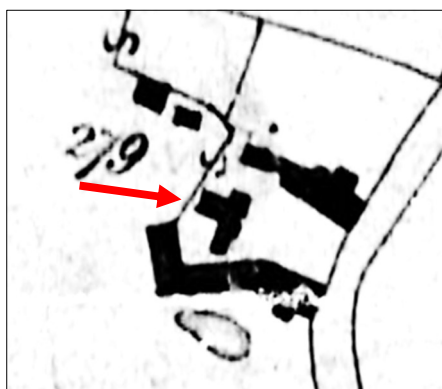


Figure 2. Extract from the 1842 Clothall Tithe Map

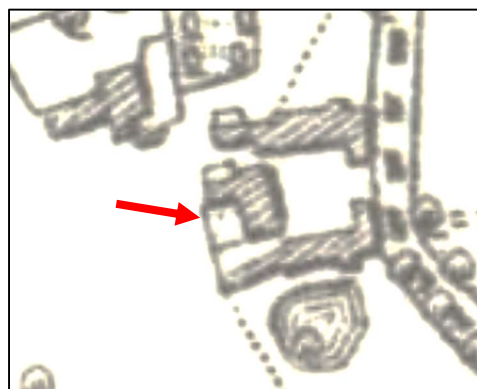


Figure 3. Extract from the 1884 Ordnance Survey map



Figure 4. Extract from the 1898 Ordnance Survey map

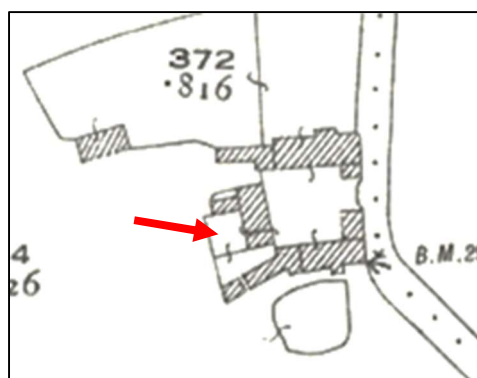


Figure 5. Extract from the 1923 Ordnance Survey map

A photograph of Walnut Tree Farmhouse in 1959 (Fig. 6) shows it with roughcast render (un-painted) to the front elevation and various casement windows.



Figure 6. Walnut Tree Farm in c 1959 with roughcast render to the front elevation
[https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/202012?place=Luffenhall%2c+Hertfordshire+\(Place\)&terms=Luffenhall&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=-1&wm=1&bc=2%7c3&g=5683](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/202012?place=Luffenhall%2c+Hertfordshire+(Place)&terms=Luffenhall&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=-1&wm=1&bc=2%7c3&g=5683)

3.0 Description

External

The farmhouse is a low two storey building set on a weatherboarded plinth given prominence by its position on the hill side. The elevations are painted rough cast for the late medieval range front range and jettied cross wing, with the exception of the north elevation which has an eighteenth-century chequered brick ground floor. The rear wing has a modern brick ground floor and rendered first floor where visible. On the south elevation the area from the stack to the late medieval range has a paler pink/yellow brick around the French windows.

The roofs are plain clay tiled pitched roofs with various chimney stacks, including a large stack within the front roof slope (rebuilt in the nineteenth century). All the windows are timber casements, the front elevation has larger split pane triple casements at ground floor level and smaller 4-pane casements at first floor. There are similar windows to the flank and rear elevations. The windows to the main front range look to be nineteenth or early twentieth century in date.



Figure 7. Walnut Tree Farmhouse, east (front) elevation



Figure 8. Walnut Tree Farmhouse, viewed from the south-west



Figure 9. Walnut Tree Farmhouse, viewed from the west – gable end of rear wing



Figure 10. Walnut Tree Farmhouse, north gable end of front / east range

Internal

The heavy timber framing of the original fifteenth / sixteenth century front / east range is visible internally. Of note is a post in the RCHME text describing the surviving principal post supporting the open truss of the original hall. The roof has clasped purlins and the rafters are blackened. The first-floor room of the crosswing has been subdivided but is still open and has a cambered tie beam supporting the crown post roof with high collar-purlin and thin two-way brace. The stairs in the service wing are in their original position but are later and lead to the first-floor room with impressive framing, including curved wind bracing.

The rear wing was originally constructed in the early eighteenth century however it looks to have been largely rebuilt whilst retaining the inglenook fireplace on the ground floor. The development of Walnut Tree Farmhouse is shown upon the phased plan (Figure 13).



Figure 11. Timber frame to cross wing, first floor



Figure 12. Timber frame to rear wall of front range

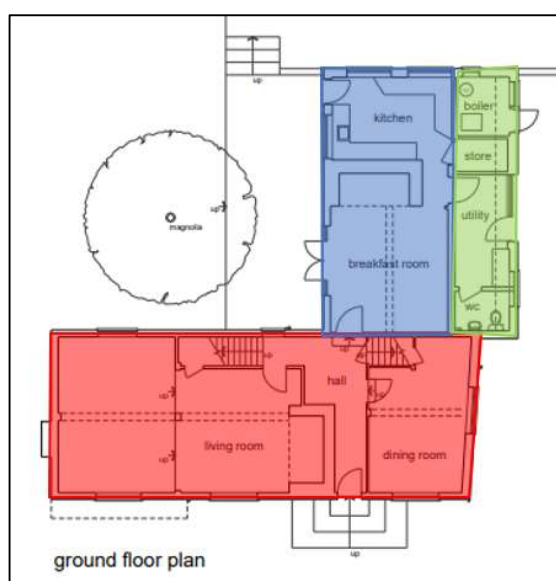


Figure 13. Phased plan
Red: late medieval hall house; Blue: 18th century rear wing (rebuilt); Green: twentiethcentury

4.0 Impact assessment

Significance is defined in the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This derives not only from the physical building but also from its setting. It also states that significance has four areas of interest: archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic. Walnut Tree Farmhouse is of architectural significance as a good surviving example of a late medieval hall house with service end and cross wing; it is remarkably well preserved, despite the later inevitable alterations to floor the hall. The rear wing originally dating from c. 1700 has been rebuilt (as far as it is possible to see) with the exception of the interior of the inglenook on the ground floor. Its historic significance lies in its material evidence as an historic farmstead that has evolved in response to the changing history of British farming. Little is known of the history of its ownership and occupation beyond the ownership of the Izard family, wealthy local brewers in 1842.

As is typical with many historic buildings the various windows to Walnut Tree Farmhouse are not 'original' to the fifteenth / sixteenth century property and are later replacements. Some of the windows within the front range may occupy historic openings but the larger, ground floor window openings on the front elevation look to have been significantly enlarged. The flush side hung timber casement windows to the front range look to date to the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, whilst those to the rebuilt rear wing and twentieth century extension to the side of the rear wing are all twentieth century. The windows contain single glazed panes held within the frames with putty. None of the timber windows are of any particular architectural significance but they represent a traditional style of casement window design seen upon historic buildings.

The windows are generally in poor condition, and the majority have rotted, particularly to the bottom parts of the windows which are most exposed and where moisture collects. Many of the window cills are also rotten and beyond repair. For a more detailed report on the condition of the windows see the plans accompanying the application. Figures 14 to 17 show examples of the poor condition of the windows. Figure 18 shows that water is penetrating the interior and collecting on the window ledge.



Figure 14. Window 2 (front elevation, ground floor centre).
Peeling paint and rot to bottom part of window



Figure 15. Rot to the base of window 12 (rear wing, south roof slope)



Figure 16. Window 20 (north gable end of main range, 1st floor).
Rot to base of window next to joint.



Figure 17. Window 5, south gable end of front range.
Rot to base of window.



Figure 18. Window 4. Water ingress sitting on
window ledge

The windows are all to be replaced on a like-for-like basis in hardwood versions, painted white and incorporating slim profile double glazed units (comprising two 4mm panes with a 4mm air gap between).

The replacement of the existing windows, which are in poor condition, with well-designed and detailed flush timber casements, to match the existing will fully preserve the character and appearance of the listed building. The applicant is also keen to improve the thermal efficiency of their home through the introduction of slim profile double glazed units, set within the replacement windows. The slim profile of the double-glazed units will ensure the double glazing is not easily discernible and the windows are all appropriately designed and detailed. The significance of the listed building will be preserved, and the resulting improved thermal performance will provide a modest public benefit.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The principal significance of Walnut Tree Farmhouse lies in its architectural interest as a good example of a medieval hall house (fifteenth / sixteenth century), with a jettied cross wing at its southern end and service wing to the north. The timber frame internally is very well preserved despite later alterations as part of installing a floor level within the hall in the seventeenth century. The eighteenth-century rear wing looks to have been largely rebuilt. Its historic significance lies in its material evidence as an historic farmstead that has evolved in response to the changing history of British farming.

None of the timber windows are of any particular architectural significance but they represent a traditional style of timber casement window design seen upon historic buildings. The proposed replacement of the existing windows will be on a visually like-for-like basis, the new windows will be flush casements with a paint finish to match existing. The incorporation of slim profile double glazed units will have a neutral impact upon the significance of Walnut Tree Farmhouse whilst providing a modest public benefit through the resulting improved thermal performance.

The proposal will preserve the significance of Walnut Tree Farmhouse (a designated heritage asset) and consent should be granted on this basis.

6.0 Bibliography

General books and papers:

Brunskill, RW. 1992 *Traditional Buildings of Britain*. Gollancz, London

Brunskill, RW. 2000 *Vernacular Architecture. An Illustrated Handbook*. Faber and Faber Ltd, London

Page, W. 1912 *A History of the County of Hertfordshire: Volume 3*. Victoria County History

Documents and Maps:

www.thegenealogist.co.uk

<https://maps.nls.uk>

Website:

www.heritagegateway.org

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Walnut Tree Farmhouse, Luffenhall

County: Hertfordshire

District: North Hertfordshire

Parish: Clothall

Grade: II

Date first listed: 27th May 1968

List Entry Number: 1175895

National Grid Reference: TL2926328494

Details

Farmhouse. C15-16 hall house with a jettied cross wing on S side. Floor and stack inserted in C17. Timber frame. Roughcast walls. Weatherboarded plinth. Plain tile roof. 2 storeys. 3 wood glazing bar casements. Large square stack on front slope of roof. Plank door to right of stack with an early C19 moulded frame and segmental hood. 2 box casement dormers. Right return gable end has C18 chequered red brick ground floor. Beyond this is a C17 rear wing in the gable end stack. The left return gable end has a late C18 external stack. The interior ground floor wall behind this stack shows large curved tension braces and a heavy chamfered floor beam. Curved brackets to jetty.