

# Windows - Assessment

## Northaw House, Northaw

### Introduction

1. Following a site visit with Place Services on Monday 7th November, this note pulls together information regarding the front ground floor windows at Northaw House in order to provide justification for their replacement with sash windows.

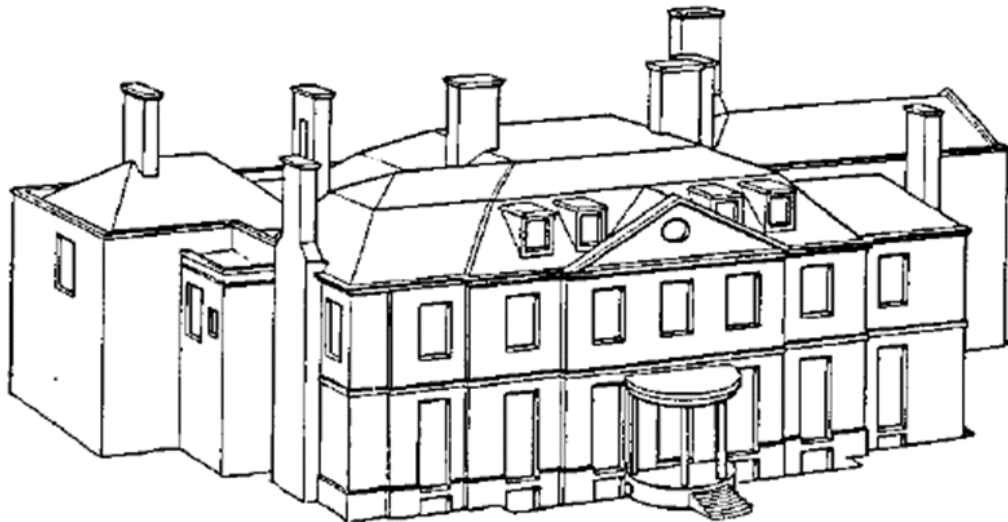
### Historic Research

2. Originally Northaw House would have been a modestly scaled building featuring a five bay frontage and double pile plan. At this time it is likely that the building was detached with subservient blocks to the east and west comprising stables and kitchens etc.
3. A thorough assessment of the building was undertaken as part of JT Smith's 'Hertfordshire Houses: Selective Inventory' (1993) and as part of this a sketch demonstrating the building's original appearance was provided (**Figure 1**).



*Figure 1: Phase 1 of Northaw House c. 1698*

4. At this time the windows present to Northaw House would almost certainly have been sliding sash windows which became popular in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century and were commonly used on high status buildings such as this.
5. It is during the late 18th century (certainly pre-1805 as demonstrated by a surviving sketch, Figure 2) that the most comprehensive alterations to the structure were undertaken. The most significant of which was the extension of the frontage from five bays to seven and it is likely that at this point the wing to the west was reconstructed and adjoined to the main dwelling. Also likely undertaken as part of these works were changes (and certainly pre-1805) to the front elevation ground floor windows which were lengthened cutting into the original plinth which ran across the width of the five bay house.
6. These alterations are shown on a second phasing sketch (**Figure 2**) contained within JT Smith's 'Hertfordshire Houses: Selective Inventory' (1993).



*Figure 2: Phases 2 and 3 of Northaw House c. 1833*

7. The first image to clearly show the front elevation of Northaw House is an 1805 engraving by James Peller Malcolm (**Figure 3**) who was an American/English topographer and engraver who lived between 1767 and 1815.



*Figure 3: 1805 Engraving of Northaw House by J P Malcolm*

8. The engraving shows the lengthened windows and the extended building. The style windows themselves are difficult to make out but appear to show each window comprising 8 panes of large glass. While it would be more typical to find sash windows in a building of this nature, it could be that larger French doors, which were gaining in popularity in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, were introduced due to the scale of the openings (though it is important to note that in this case the windows were never actively used as doors given that they are suspended far above the ground and there is no known evidence of balconies etc.).
9. The next image to show the front elevation of Northaw House is an 1830 sketch (**Figure 4**) by John Chessell Buckler (1793-1894) who was a British architect. This image shows sash windows present to the ground floor front rooms. The sketch suggests a 6 over 6 arrangement but it is likely, due to the scale of the windows, that a 9 over 9 or even 12 over 12 would have been present.
10. Internally within the building sash boxes (including sash weights) and shutters survive which further confirm the presence of historic sash windows within these front rooms.



*Figure 4: 1830 Sketch by J C Buckler*

11. By c.1900-1905 the current 8 panel windows appear to have been introduced. Based on photographic and stylistic evidence, these appear to have been introduced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These windows, while relating to those shown in the 1805 engraving, are not sensitive in their own right (being relating late in date) and do not, aesthetically, relate positively to the building where upper floors feature multipaned sash windows characteristic of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.



*Figure 5: Photograph of c.1900-1905 © Hertford Museum*

## Assessment

12. Based on the research presented above, it is clear that both the form of the front ground floor window openings, and the design of the windows themselves, has changed considerably over time. This appears to be due to the process of gentrification and alteration that Northaw House has seen since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
13. The current windows, while broadly matching those shown in the 1805 sketch, are of no special interest in their own right being late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and of fairly standardised form and construction. Similarly, they do not contribute, in any meaningful way, to the significance of the grade II listed building.
14. Historic England, as part of Traditional Windows – Their Care, Repair and Upgrading (2017), have provided guidance on making changes to windows in listed buildings. In accordance with the guidance, in this case, there is justification for the windows (which, while historic, do not contribute to the significance of the listed building) to be replaced without causing harm to the significance of the listed building in principle. This appears to be an agreed position with Place Services based on the conversations undertaken on site on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022. As such, the main consideration is the form of the replacement windows and what would be most appropriate for Northaw House and the significance of this asset.
15. Evidence presented above, specifically the two 19<sup>th</sup> century sketches and physical evidence of sashes present, suggests that either an 8 pane casement or a sash window could be introduced in a way which was sympathetic to the asset's significance. However, it is traditionally detailed timber sash window which would be, in my professional opinion, the most appropriate solution.
16. While some consideration needs to be paid to the form of the windows, sash windows are considered the most appropriate solution due to a number of reasons:
  - Evidence suggests that the original (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) windows would have been sashes;
  - Sashes were known to have been in place in the lengthened window openings during the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century;

- Appropriately detailed sash windows would relate positively to the retained sash boxes and shutters allowing the shutters to be actively used once more;
  - Appropriately detailed sash windows would, from a aesthetic and architectural perspective, relate most positively to the building where traditional sash windows are present to the first floor; and
  - The use of appropriate detailed sash windows would provide a coherent and consistent character to the front of the building and reinstate its known early to mid 19th century character.
17. Detailing of any sash windows needs to be carefully considered and it is recommended that existing first floor historic windows could be used as inspiration for the profile and detailing of the glazing bars etc.
18. In addition, some exercises and consideration would be need to be paid as to the arrangement of the panes. In keeping with the first floor windows and the 1830 sketch, new sash windows should be three panes wide but the number of panes vertically is less clear. Depending on how options look drawn up, this could amount to either 6 over 6, 9 over 9 or even 12 over 12 sash windows. The key issue will be to create a window which appears to be in keeping with the scale and character of the sashes present to the first floor.

## Conclusions

19. In accordance with the research and assessment presented above t is clear that both the form of the front ground floor window openings, and the design of the windows themselves, has changed considerably over time. There does not appear to be any objection to the replacement of the front ground floor windows in principle and, on the basis of evidence presented in this note, the most appropriate solution appears to be the reinstatement of sash windows in to these opening. Additional consideration and detailing is required moving forward but the recommendation is to replace these windows with traditional timber double hung sashes.

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