



Willow House
Fen Lane
Thelnetham, Suffolk
(Postal address: Diss, Norfolk)
IP22 1JX

Guide Price: £470,000



This 15th century house is a rare find: an unspoilt medieval yeoman's hall within one and three quarter acres and beautiful countryside.

2 reception rooms, study, kitchen,
2 bathrooms, 4 bedrooms.

The Property: This wonderful Suffolk Grade II Listed timber framed hall house has not been spoilt by over-zealous improvement but rather has been sensitively restored with as many of the modern services as possible hidden. It is an unspoilt gem of vernacular architecture in a little corner of an older England. It has many features: medieval double service arches, exposed timber frame, the variety of fireplaces including the central 'beehive' fireplace in the dining room with its old high mantel above and brick oven built perhaps around 1600. There are wide boarded floors, shuttered windows and beautiful oak doors with traditional locks. The brick floors are probably of 18th century date and cover most of the ground floor area of the original dwelling. The roof was re-thatched in the late 1990s with long straw – an old variety low in nitrogen was grown especially for the task. With routine maintenance it is expected to last another 15 years or more. The homely décor is shabby chic, perhaps with the emphasis on the shabby, and although almost palatial by the standards of the 15th century, the dwelling may now be regarded as modest in size and structure but this conceals its true worth as a jewel of the English heritage, not perhaps a huge topaz rather a small emerald in Suffolk's crown. In truth, this property is a great rarity: a modest yeoman's hall built in the 1400s and surviving largely intact, nestling on the gentle southern slope of the valley of the Little Ouse. Its quiet atmosphere speaks of past centuries.

The Grounds: In the grounds there are many mature trees including oak, ash as well as ancient hazel stools and field maple. Specimens of spindle and alder buckthorn adorn the garden. Many wild flowers grow in the plot including bee orchids, shepherd's needle and a rare plant of ancient woodlands, herb paris. Fruit trees abound: wild cherry, apple, pear, plum, damson, quince and medlar. Younger trees of hardbeam and native black poplar, one of Britain's rarest trees, as well as native small-leaved limes were planted within the last 20 years. There are two spacious pantiled and rendered garage/workshops and various sheds and stores. There is an enclosed vegetable garden surrounded by a paddock of approximately half an acre with another smaller meadow orchard with pear trees, plum, bullace, mulberry and crab apple. The gardens encourage a wide variety of wildlife. An interesting feature is the level of the house which is at the original medieval ground level but centuries of soil drift from the fields to the south, arrested by an old hedge system, built the topsoil to a depth of around 2' so the building now sits protected by an earthen bank and nestles into the landscape. This slow soil drift now provides some of the richest tilth in Thelnetham. Overall the property is set within approximately one and three quarter acres (STS)

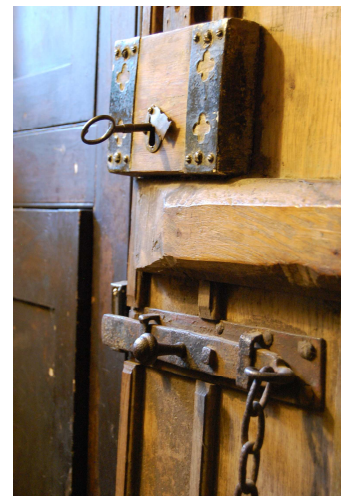
Literary and Artistic Associations: This house has been owned for a good part of the 20th century by various writers and artists. Paddy Middleton, the painter, lived here in the 1940s. Later, John Middleton Murry, eminent critic of his day and founder of the Adelphi Magazine, owned the property. His desk and sofa belonging to his first wife, author Katherine Mansfield, are still used in the house. Pictures by his brother, painter and illustrator

Richard Murry, represented in the Ashmolean, hang on the walls. Edmund Cooper, science fiction writer, lived and worked there and the tradition continues today.

Services: Mains water and electricity are connected to the property. Drainage to a recently installed private treatment plant. Oil fired boiler providing heating. Please note that the services/appliances/central heating and heating system/plumbing and electrical installations have not been tested by the selling agents and the purchasers must satisfy themselves as to the condition and warranty of these items.

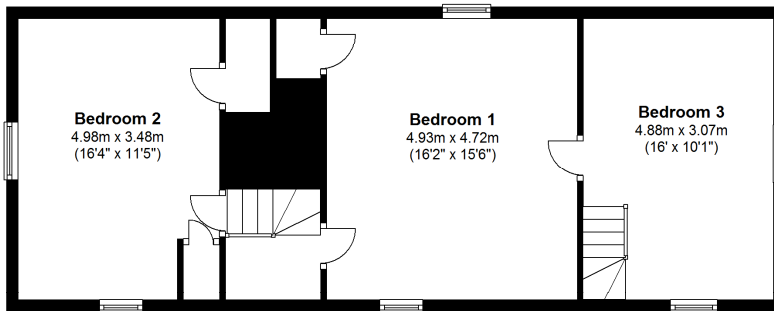
Viewing:
Strictly by appointment
with TW Gaze.

Freehold
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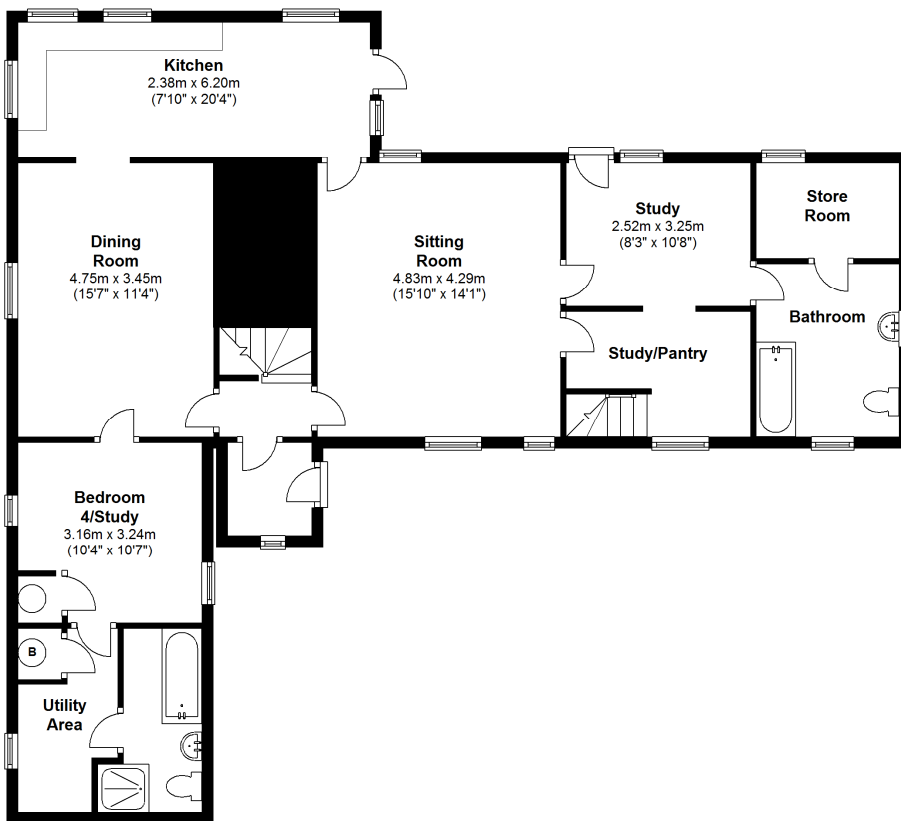
First Floor

Approx. 64.9 sq. metres (698.6 sq. feet)



Ground Floor

Approx. 114.0 sq. metres (1227.2 sq. feet)

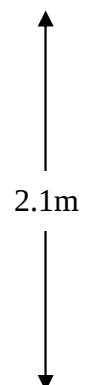


Total area: approx. 178.9 sq. metres (1925.8 sq. feet)

Willow House, Thelnetham

Although loftier than the average cottage and with about 1900 square feet of floor space, the house has three first-floor bedrooms served by two old stairways and a study/bedroom on the ground floor. Its main ground floor reception rooms vary in size but are pleasingly spacious.

Potential buyers may wish to know if Auntie Eileen's old chest will fit in here, if Uncle Freddie's desk will go in this corner or Mother's picture can hang on that wall. Cybernetic wonders have been performed with Gazes state of the art laser-driven measuring stick. And given that the house was built long before the corrosive concept of actually measuring things took hold of the architectural mind and straight lines and rectangles clogged its sense of beauty, the drawing is approximate and offers only electronic opinion, not Gospel Truth. It should not be used to determine the very last bleam of length nor yet the last asm of width, as in some rooms ceilings are bigger than floors and in other rooms vice versa. However, scaling it up from the measurements given could broadly answer some of these important questions. What about Grandfather's clock – is its time finally up? No, a rough average ceiling height downstairs is about 2.1 metres or 82-83 Earth inches, or up to 100 inches if you dig a hole in the floor. With this difficulty foreseen: for those of troubled mind a spade will be provided.



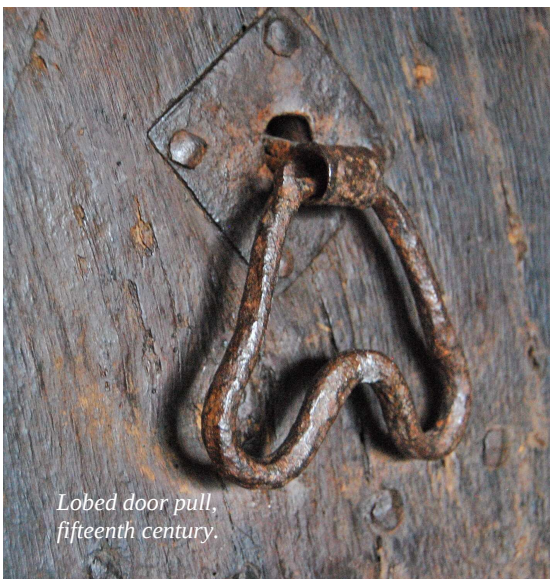


In the dining room the inglenook has a central 'beehive' fireplace, with old high mantel-piece above. Beyond is the elder of the two brick ovens, built perhaps around 1600. The alcove above it is a bread warming and proving area with arched access. The open fire supplements the oil fired central heating.



Bedroom Three has panelled banister sides and also a safety gate at the landing area should a young child need to sleep there

Bedroom Two above also has two small built-in cupboards with hanging rails for clothes. As with all the bedrooms there are two aspects, in this case south and east. And in those long hot summer days wooden casement shutters to the south keep out old Phoebus' probing eye...



Lobed door pull, fifteenth century.



Two studies

One a study of calm and contentment...



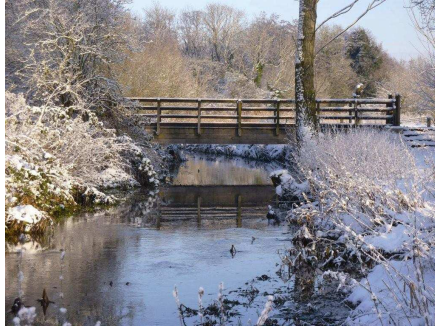
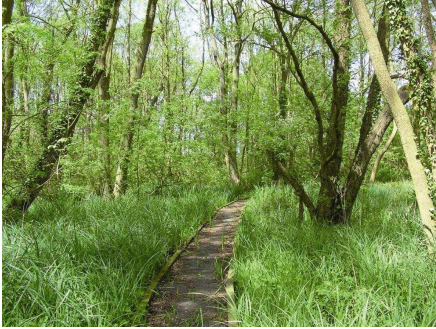
... the other a study of chaos

Chaucer he say:



“Diss 7 miles”

*“But al shal passe, that men prose or rhyme;
Take every man his tourne, as for his tyme
Envoy to Scogan*



Photos: Courtesy of Helen Smith

Transport

In spite of its quiet location in a peaceful village, larger towns are close by.

Approximate journey times are: by road 40 minutes to Norwich; 12 minutes to Diss, about 15 to Thetford, 30 to BurySt Edmunds, all historic towns. Cambridge, important cultural centre, is an hour away.

Rail: Diss station is on the main line and Liverpool Street can be reached in about an hour and a half. Harling Road is the nearest station geographically and connects via Thetford to Ely, the Midlands and North.

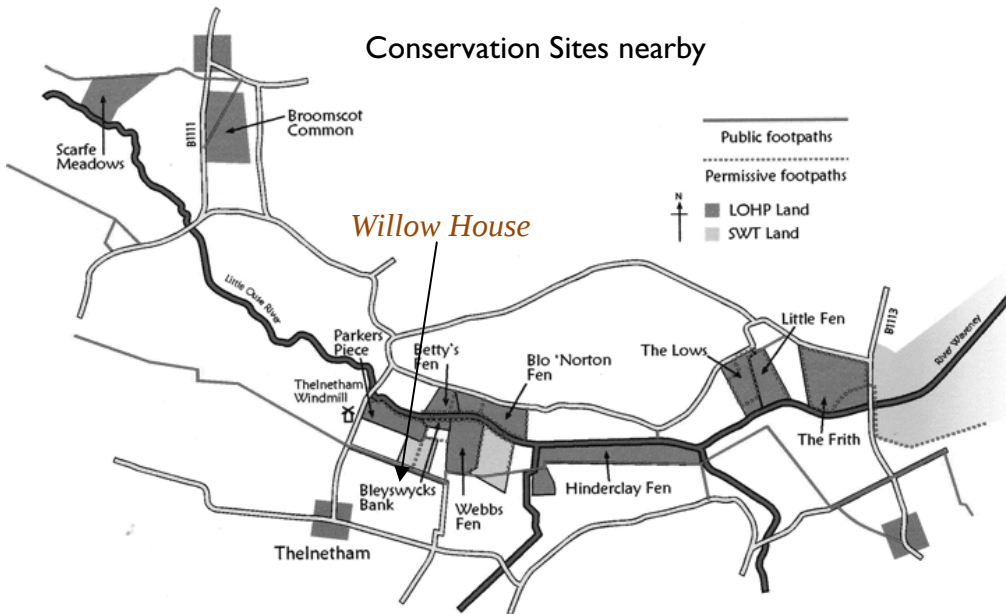
Directions

(Postcode: IP22 1JX)

From Diss

- Join the A1066 Thetford Road.
- At South Lopham pass the White Horse and take next left to Blo' Norton, also marked Thelnetham Windmill.
- At Blo' Norton church turn left, again marked Mill. Follow this road through village. Again follow Mill sign. Go through ford. Windmill is on the right. After 100 yards turns left into Fen Lane, Willow House is the third on the right with tree covered driveway.
- From Bury St Edmunds*
- Take the A143 Diss road.
- At Stanton turn left to Barningham/Garboldisham.
- At Hopton turn right at village shop. Approaching Thelnetham take left turn into Mill Road.
- About 100 yards before windmill turn right into Fen Lane. Willow House is the third on the right with tree covered driveway.

Conservation Sites nearby



Outdoor activities

The house stands in Fen Lane, a small by-road with little traffic, and looks out onto Thelnetham Middle Fen. This is an SSSI, and important internationally as a rare 'spring-fed' fen. It is also a nature reserve owned by the village and managed by the Suffolk Trust. There are many footpaths; the Angles Way passes through the Old Fen nearby. It is close the Norfolk/Suffolk border in an area which, with its windmill and water meadows is designated as of important landscape value, a label that precludes future development close by.

Large parts of the valley and surrounding area are owned or managed by conservation charities Suffolk Trust and the Little Ouse Headwaters Project, as well as by the village's own Fen Trust. Ancient rights will pass to the purchaser; these permit the annual taking of wood from the Fen, chiefly the alder, ash and sycamore that encroaches.



Residential Property

Commercial Property

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