

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

LITTLE WENHAM CASTLE (LITTLE WENHAM HALL) CHURCH LANE, LITTLE WENHAM

Grid Reference	TM 03 NE 3/77
List Grade	I
Conservation Area	No
Description	<p>Fortified House, now used as a private museum. Believed to be circa 1260-1290 for Sir John de Vallibus and Petronilla of Nerford who succeeded him circa 1287. Later alterations include those of John Brewse circa 1569 (date over ground floor door, west wall), a wing was added at the south west corner, it is believed during C16, and has since been destroyed. Brothers Frederick and George Crisp purchased the property circa 1884 and carried out repairs and restorations C19 and C20. Timber stairs to first floor west doorway added C20 by Major A T C Binny. Of early vari-coloured brick, the base with flint, brick and septaria. Stone dressings. C16 brick to west wall chimney stack above first floor level, the stack offset, with octagonal shaft. C19 red brick and ashlar repairs. A band continues through the building, below the first floor window cills, excepting at the south west corner. Brick crenellation with moulded coping throughout. L plan, the hall running north to south with stepped angle buttress except to south west corner. The taller chapel range projects eastward at the north end of the east wall and has stepped angle buttresses to north and eastern angles. The stair turret at re-entrant angle, east wall, rises above the main ranges. There is a low level buttress to east wall of the hall below the window. Each face of each range has stone arrow slits below the crenellations. There are narrow stone lights with square heads to stair turret. Second floor of chapel range, ?solar/guardroom has a window to each external wall of 2 lights, central shafts with moulded capitals and bases, plate tracery over, 2-centred heads and labels. First floor chapel, east window of 3 lights, 3 quatrefoils over, moulded 2-centred head and label, small lancet windows to north and south walls and a low side window in north west corner. Ground floor chapel range, lancets to the 3 external walls. Hall range:- Each face of the first floor has a window of 2 trefoiled lights, centre shafts with moulded capitals and bases, trefoils or quatrefoils over, 2-centred heads and labels. There is a doorway with chamfered segmental head to west of south wall. The main entrance doorway at south end of west wall, moulded 4-centred arch square head, sunk spandrels, jambs with attached shafts, moulded capitals and bases. Hall range, ground floor. 2 lancet windows to west wall. 2-centre arched doorway to west end of south wall. Inserted doorway with</p>

square head to south end of west wall. Above this doorway is a plaque inscribed "Cecy fait a l'aide de Dieu l'an de grace 1569 R.B" which was preserved when the added wing was demolished late C18.

Interior:- Ground floor, main range, 3 hollow chamfered rib vaulted bays, polygonal responds with moulded capitals and bases. A 2-centre arched doorway, with label, moulded capitals and bases to jambs, leads into the square ground floor room of the chapel range, from the north east corner. This room of one bay with similar vaulting and stone flag floor. Chamfered 2-centred arch to stair turret doorway. First floor, main range, the hall is approx 40ft long. C16 timber ceiling of 4 cambered bay, moulded bridging and ceiling joists, moulded cornice. Pallet tiled floor. Chamfered arched to window splays, labels over. A window seat with moulded sides is cut into the centre of each window cill. Niche to east of south wall, moulded and crenellated head, cusped and sub-cused ogee arch, trefoiled panels over, moulded bases to side shafts, plain cill with rear drain hole. Fireplace to west wall, red brick angled back, timber mantel beam with moulded soffit, moulded jambs. The fine entry to the chapel is to the north of the east wall. The central doorway is flanked by 2-light windows. The doorway with 2-centred arch of 2 sunk chamfered orders, moulded capitals and splayed stops to jambs, moulded label with carved stops. Each side light sunk chamfered of 2 two-centred lights, central polygonal shafts with moulded capitals and bases, blank quatrefoils over. Moulded labels with stops. Segmental rear arches to doorway and sidelights. Each side light has a shutter with two strap hinges opening into the chapel. Pair of panelled doors to doorway. The vaulted chapel ceiling had moulded arches and ribs on corbels. The 2 western corbels moulded, the 2 eastern corbels carved with head stops and foilage. Carved central boss depicting St Petronilla. The south wall low cill lancet forms a sedile, the piscina with 2 double arches is set into the eastern splay, moulded trefoiled 2-centred arches, moulded capitals and bases to side and central shafts. Stone flag floor. Flanking the east window are small shelves. North east of the north wall is an aumbry with 2-centred head and label with carved stops, pair of C19/C20 doors with strap hinges. C20 altar in front of east window. Stair turret doorway to west of south wall, chamfered 2-centred arch. The solar/guard room, above the chapel is approached by the spiral stairs, each doorway off the stair turret is similar to the doorway in the chapel, with board doors and strap hinges. The solar has no outstanding features, ceiling with flat section beams and stop chamfered principals. The spiral stairs continue onto the roof which is cambered and lead covered. The house is of great importance as it represents one of the earliest uses of home made brick in England and it was built as a house, not a keep. The hall came to the Holbrooks & Debenhams, a

daughter of this family married Sir Thomas de Brewse circa 1440, John Brewse sold to Joseph Thurston circa 1695 and Thomas Thurston parted with the estate 1765. Sir Peyton Ventris was born here 1645. N Pevsner. Suffolk 1974. Whites Directory of Suffolk 1844. P G M Dickinson. The Little Guide to Suffolk 1957. E Sandon Suffolk House 1977.

Suggested/Favoured Use	None
Condition	Poor
Reason for Risk	Repair required. Forms part of a group of buildings with no secure future, many of which require significant repair.
Owner/Agent	Mrs E C Binny, Little Wenham Hall, Colchester, CO7 6PZ (Tel: 01473 310230)
Current Availability	Unknown
Notes	Scheduled Ancient Monument
Contact	Clare Vint 01473 825784

