



THE
ENVIRONMENT
PARTNERSHIP



2 MILL COTTAGES, NENE WAY ASHTON, PETERBOROUGH HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING REPORT

Event No. ENN110828

OASIS ID. theenvir1-437700

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OASIS Report Form

The Environment Partnership (TEP)

Job Number:	9614
Project Name:	2 Mill Cottages, Ashton
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PROJECT DETAILS:		
Short description	<p>The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd were instructed to undertake a programme of historic building recording at 2 Mill Cottages, Ashton, Peterborough, ahead of a proposed scheme of redevelopment. The survey corresponded with Historic England Level 2 guidance and including a photographic, drawn, and written survey supported by archival research. The surveyed structures comprised a range of outbuildings enclosing a courtyard which were located to the north of an early 18th century residential dwelling. The building is located in the close vicinity of a historic mill with which it may have been historically associated as a dwelling.</p> <p>On site investigation supported by archival research provided evidence for phases of alterations and extensions to the property and outbuilding, suggesting a rearrangement and reconstruction of the outbuilding during the 19th century, as well as changes to the main house including construction of a large extension, alterations to internal floor levels, and changes to the fenestration scheme including the introduction of sash windows from the mi 19th century.</p>	
Project type	Historic building recording	
Previous work	None	
Current lane use	Residential dwelling	
Future work	Not known	
Monument type and period	Post medieval house	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION:		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	2 Mill Cottage, Nene Way, Ashton, Peterborough, PE8 5LB	
Easting Northing	TL 0517 8824	
Area (sq ./ha)	-	
Height aOD	25m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS:		
Organisation	The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire Council Archaeological Advisor	
Project design originator	The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd	
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke	
Project manager	Amir Bassir	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr Chris Shaw	
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Executive Summary

The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd were instructed to undertake a programme of historic building recording at 2 Mill Cottage, Ashton, Oundle, Northamptonshire, ahead of a proposed scheme of redevelopment. The survey corresponded with Historic England Level 2 guidance and included a photographic, drawn, and written survey supported by archival research. The surveyed structures comprised a range of outbuildings enclosing a courtyard which were located to the north of an early 18th century residential dwelling. The building is located in the close vicinity of a historic mill with which it may have been historically associated as a dwelling.

On site investigation supported by archival research provided evidence for phases of alterations and extensions to the property and outbuilding, suggesting a rearrangement and reconstruction of the outbuilding during the 19th century, as well as changes to the main house including construction of a large extension, alterations to internal floor levels, and changes to the fenestration scheme including the introduction of sash windows from the mid 19th century.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Environment Partnership (TEP) was instructed by Mr Chris Shaw to undertake a programme of Historic Building Recording at 2 Mill Cottages, Oundle Road, Ashton, Peterborough, PE8 5LB (NGR TL 0517 8824).
- 1.2 Planning approval has been granted for alterations to the property which forms part of a Grade II Listing "Mill Cottage Flat Mill House Mill Tearoom" (Listing Ref 1371911). Condition 4 of planning application reference NE/22/00107/FUL states:

No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.

- 1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (TEP 2022) was produced setting out the proposed methodology, resources, and programme for historic building recording. It was prepared specifically to correspond with Historic England Level 2 guidelines as set out in the guidance document Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (HE, 2016).
- 1.4 This report provides an overview of the results of the historic building recording survey. It has been prepared in accordance with current best archaeological practice as defined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's Code of Conduct (CIfA, 2021), Standards and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures (CIfA, 2020), and Historic England's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (HE, 2015).
- 1.5 2 Mill Cottage is part of the grade II listed building referred to in the listing description as 'Mill Cottage Flat Mill House Mill Tearoom' (List Entry Number: 1371911). The listing description is as follows:

Mill house now 2 dwellings and tearoom. Datestone M/IC/1729, evidence of earlier build, also C19 alterations. Squared coursed limestone with Collyweston slate roof. Originally probably 3-unit plan, now U-shaped. 2 storeys. Irregular 3-window range at first floor and 5-window range at ground floor. C19 sash windows under wood lintels. C19 ashlar porch, to left of centre, has flat roof and 4-panel, part-glazed, door. C19 yellow brick stacks at ridge and end. Evidence of some blocked openings to front elevation and evidence of earlier roof level to left gable end. Rear elevation is similar with irregular projecting wings to left and right. 5-window range of C19 sash windows under wood lintels. Interior not inspected but noted as remodelled C19.

- 1.6 In 2002, East Northamptonshire Council approved a change of use application (02/00829/LBC) which resulted in the conversion of the flat and tearoom back to use as a fully residential dwelling. The buildings are now numbers 1 and 2 Mill Cottages.

2.0 Location and Topography

- 2.1 The site is located at 2 Mill Cottages, Nene Way, Ashton, Peterborough, PE8 5LB (NGR TL 0517 8824). The site is located a short distance to the west of the village of Ashton and on the west side of Nene Way which connects Oundle and Polebrook. The River Nene flows a short distance to the east of the site with channels branching off to connect to the Grade II* Listed Ashton Mill. 1 and 2 Mill Cottages comprise a connected linear range with extensions and are situated parallel to Oundle Road, adjacent to an entrance off the road which leads to Ashton Mill and associated outbuildings.
- 2.2 The historic settlement of Ashton village, including Ashton Mill, lies within the Ashton Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Review document describes Ashton Mill as an outlier to the village, standing between the river and the west side of the Polebrook Road (DE Landscape & Design, 2017). The millpond survives as does the mill cottages and later ancillary buildings.
- 2.3 The building which was the subject of this survey is an outbuilding at the north side of 2 Mill Cottages where it is proposed to create a series of habitable rooms from the courtyard and outbuilding, through the installation of a low-profile roof with rooflight. Internal alterations will include room subdivisions and new openings including access and windows (Smithers Purslow, Undated).
- 2.4 The site is located at c25m above Ordnance Datum (aOD); the overall site topography forms a low valley around the Nene with gradual slopes towards the east and west.
- 2.5 The underlying bedrock geology has been mapped as comprising the Rutland Formation (Jurassic period sandstone and limestone), as well as Blisworth Limestone Formation and Stamford Foundation which outcrop in the vicinity (BGS, 2022). These are overlain by alluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel of the Quaternary period.

3.0 Historic Background

Ashton is a hamlet in this parish [Oundle], containing a few scattered farm-houses, on the eastern side of the Nene, about 1 mile east of Oundle. Its population in 1841 was 172; in 1861, 177; in 1871, 153; and J. W. Smith Esq., is lord of the manor. Here is a free school, founded and endowed, in 1705, by Jemima Creed, with a field, containing about 20 acres, which yields about £57, 10s. per annum (Whelan, 1874: 716).

- 3.1 The area around Oundle has provided evidence for human occupation dating to the Roman period. Evidence for the prehistoric period is sparse and no Iron Age hillforts have been identified in the Oundle Area. However, the most likely topographic position for such a site has been identified as the site of the church and manor which occupy the east end of a ridge encompassed by river on three sides (Foard and Ballinger, 2002).
- 3.2 To the north of Ashton is a large scheduled monument comprising 'Ashton Roman small town' (List Entry Number: 1021454) which is described as "an important example of an undefended Roman small town whose main significance seems to have lain in its location at a key river crossing, possibly close to an existing important late Iron Age site" (HE, 2022).
- 3.3 Within Oundle itself is a scheduled monument 'Saxon settlement enclosure' (List Entry Number: 1006619). In the early medieval period Oundle was probably the capital of a sub-unit of the Mercian kingdom, based upon an earlier tribal unit. Oundle likely served as a major royal administrative site and a monastery may also have existed here. This may have been destroyed by Danes during the 9th century (Foard and Ballinger, 2002).
- 3.4 Ashton is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Ascetone which is interpreted as meaning 'farmstead where ash-trees grow' (Mills 2011) and is described as 8 ploughlands including meadow, woodland, and two mills, and with households comprising 11 villagers, 2 smallholders and 1 slave. A resurgent monastery at Oundle was abandoned in favour of Peterborough, which was granted the Oundle estate at its foundation. By 1086 Oundle was one of four documented markets, possibly as a result of its earlier administrative status. The town's growth was promoted by the abbots of Peterborough and grew substantially during the 12th and 13th centuries becoming one of main market centres in the Nene valley area. The Oundle Extensive Urban Survey notes that there was an extensive medieval fishery in the Nene from Stoke Mill dam to Ashton Mill (Foard and Ballinger, 2002).
- 3.5 During the 12th century, Oundle parish encompassed the chapel at Churchfield and those at Ashton and Elmington. This was confirmed in 1332 when the rights of the manor of Oundle were defined to include the Chapels at Ashton, Elmington and Churchfield (Foard and Ballinger, 2002). A survey of 1321 stated that "in Ashton there were a messuage (dwelling with associated buildings and lands) and two water mills" (Izzard 2018). North Bridge, which crosses the Nene to the north-east of Oundle, was originally built in the 12th century and carried the roads towards Peterborough and through Ashton. Prior to this there was likely a ford crossing of the river close to Ashton Mill, to which a road ran from the east end of the town until Inclosure.

- 3.6 A 1525 terrier (document outlining vassals and tenants or a lordship including detail of rents) described lands associated with Ashton as distributed in five fields named as How Field, Meddleham, Overham, Chalkehill Field and Wolston Field (Hall, 1995). Five fields also occur in 1677 but under different names. A Peterborough abbey account roll records a rent in Ashton of 14 yardlands in 1308-9. The demesne farm was in hand and the permanent staff were 1 hayward, 4 ploughmen, 1 dairymaid and 1 carter. Pigs were kept in woodland (probably in Oundle woods), and the crops sown were wheat, barley, drage, oats for feeding oxen, and peas and beans. A plot called a 'rick place', being half an acre laying in common ground with hedges and fences, was sold in 1678. A record of 1673 indicates that there were 32 households at that time (Izzard 2018).
- 3.7 The Conservation Area Review states that "*By the eighteenth century Ashton was an established village with a free chapel, built in 1706. The land to the east of the village was 'recognised as a sporting estate with tenanted farms'. It is understood that the distinctive cruciform track/avenues at Ashton Wold date from this time, while the land to the north and south of the village remained split into six large medieval fields. Traces of these fields survive today in ridge and furrow retained in the present fields and, more unusually, within woodland around Ashton Wold*" (DE Landscape & Design, 2017).
- 3.8 Thomas Eyre's map of 1791 provides a basic overview of Ashton, showing principal roads and buildings (Figure 1). The Mill is shown adjacent to the river. Mills Cottages are not shown though they may have been present at that time. A similar view is provided in Bryant's map of 1827 which provides greater detail of land parcels, road layout and shows a greater number of the buildings present at that time (Figure 2).

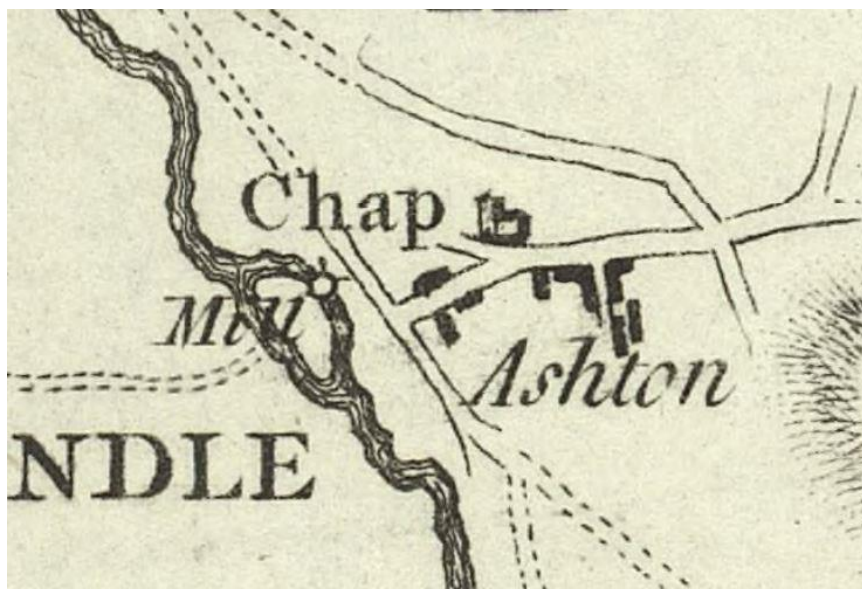


Figure 1 Extract from Thomas Eyre's Map of 1791

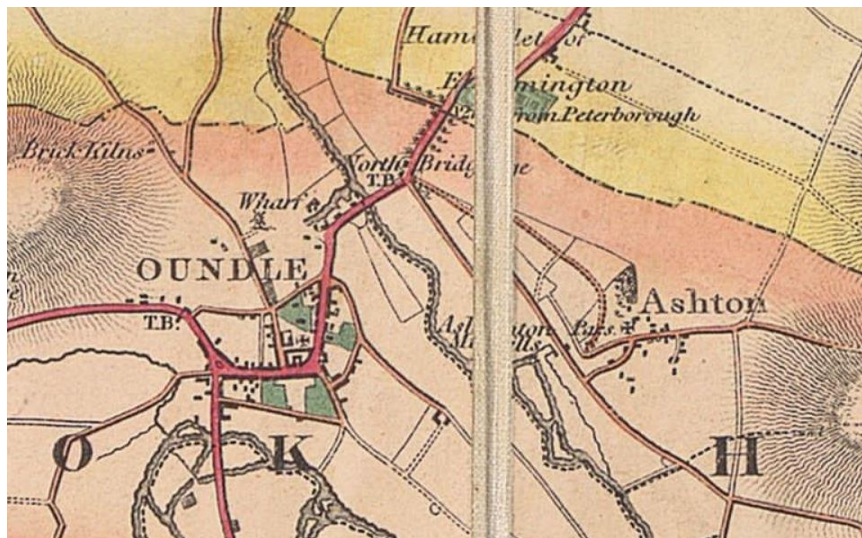


Figure 2 Extract from Bryant's map of 1827 showing the area of Oundle and Ashton

- 3.9 Ashton was enclosed in 1807 with Oundle. An Enclosure Map (Figure 3) provides a detailed overview of the village, showing closes and created fields, including the arrangement of principal buildings, and minor buildings including cottages. The survey was prepared for Dr William Walcott, then owner of the Ashton Estate who had inherited the village from his mother Mary Creed (Izzard 2018). The map shows a linear arrangement to the settlement with dwellings situated to the side of the principal road. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes that the boundaries of many enclosure fields still survive though several have been infilled with woodland and later development. The principal surviving buildings of this period include Ashton Mill, The Manor, Chapel, Public House, Green Farm and The Cottage.



Figure 3 Extract from 1810 Enclosure Map of the Lordship of Oundle (NRO ref 2858)

- 3.10 The Mill and associated buildings are shown on the enclosure map as occupying their present general arrangement with Mill Cottages comprising a linear range with an extension or small enclosure on the west side of the building, in the area of the buildings surveyed as part of this recording project. The map appears to show extensions to the rear of the house. A building with rear extension and separate outbuilding is shown on the north side of the road. The area to the north-west of the of the Mill, between the road and river is labelled as Mill Marsh, and the area to the immediate west of the Mill is labelled Mill Holme. Further south the riverside land is labelled as Lammas Closes.
- 3.11 In 1836 the village was purchased by John Smith, the Oundle Brewer (Izzard 2018). A Post Office Directory of 1854 (Kelly & Co 1854) describes Ashton as "Ashton and Elmington are hamlets belonging to this [Oundle] parish. At Ashton there is an endowed school, which is licenced also for divine worship, called Creed's charity, the vicar of Oundle for the time being having been appointed one of the trustees". The traders are listed in the directory as:
- Compton, John, Miller
 - Drage, Jospeh, 'Three Horse Shoes'
 - Fox, William, farmer and grazier
 - Hollis, Edward, farmer, Palmer, John, farmer
 - Smith, William, farmer
 - Wyatt, William, gamekeeper

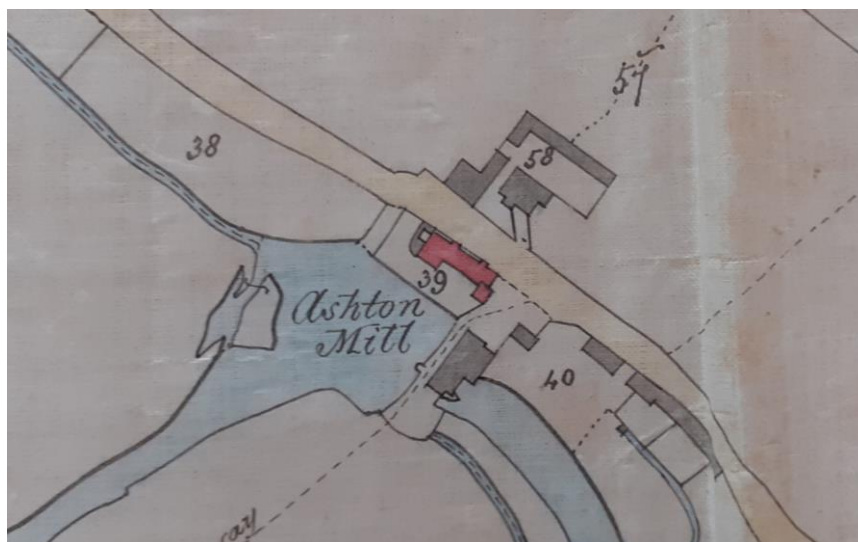


Figure 4 Ashton Estate Survey, 1853 (NRO ref 1728a)

- 3.12 An Estate Map of 1853 (NRO ref 1728a) (Figure 4) shows a good level of detail of the Mill and Mill Cottages. The Cottages are shown to include two porches facing towards the road, suggesting two entrances. At the north-west corner is a large rear extension, and a square extension, offset slightly from the building, is shown at the south-west corner. An enclosing range of outbuildings is shown against the west side of the building in the area of the surveyed buildings. These seem to show three-ranges of buildings enclosing a yard however the western side of the building is depicted as curved, a detail not reproduced on other maps.
- 3.13 The Mill can be seen have to been extended with a linear range positioned alongside the eastern wall. The buildings to the north of the road are also shown as having been expanded and a new linear building is shown enclosing a yard. A linear range of buildings can also be seen to have been constructed on the south side of the road, a short distance to the east of the entrance to the mill.
- 3.14 The Ashton Estate Sale Map (1858) (Figure 5) provides an overview of the village and environs, including Ashton Mill (NRO ref ZB706/24). The sales particulars describe Ashton as extending over 1756 acres of excellent arable, meadow, pasture and wood land, with fine meadows bounded by the river Nene. It is described as including several superior farmhouses, well-arranged homesteads and farm buildings divided into suitable occupations and let to a highly respectable tenantry including an excellent corn mill with comfortable dwelling-house.

"The buildings are generally very substantial, and in good order, the situation of the property, with reference to markets, navigable river, and railway, afford every facility for obtaining manures and transferring its produce; some of the lands on the eastern boundary of the estate are capable of considerable improvement, and there is abundance of stone, lime and gravel.

To any gentleman fond of sporting it has peculiar advantages, the woods being well adapted for the preservation of pheasants and hares, and there is a good stock of game upon the estate, which is strictly preserved, excellent coursing, and fishing in the river Nen; and Earl Fitzwilliam's the Pytchley, and Quorn Hounds, are within easy distance, thus forming in its entirety a very important domain and combining a very pleasurable occupation with a sound, safe, and first-rate landed investment".

- 3.15 Ashton Mill and Farm is described as an "old established mill... advantageously situated upon the navigable River Nen and Turnpike Road" consisting of "a spacious mill of four strong floor, chiefly built of stone and brick, worked by two undershot wheels, and driving four pairs of stones". Also described is a Dwelling House (Mill Cottages), "containing four or five attics, five bedrooms, hall, three parlours, kitchen, pantry, cellar etc; also a counting house, cart shed, and workshop and piggeries, and, across the road, a three stall stable, loft, store cellars, barn, bullock lodge etc, and sixty-two acres, two roods, and nineteen perches".



Figure 5 Extract from the Aston Estate Sales Map of 1858 (ZB706/24)

- 3.16 The 1858 Map shows little change in the area of the mill. The western outbuildings at Mill Cottages are shown as a simple block. On the plan (Figure 5) Mill Cottages is numbered 39 and described in the sales particulars as "site of house and garden"

(9)

ASHTON MILL AND FARM,
THIS OLD ESTABLISHED MILL

Is advantageously situated upon the navigable River Nene and Turnpike Road, close to the Railway Station and Market Town of Oundle, within easy distance of Peterborough, Higham Ferrers, Wellingborough, etc.,

AND CONSISTS OF

A SPACIOUS MILL OF FOUR STRONG FLOORS,
 CHIEFLY BUILT OF STONE AND BRICK,

Worked by Two Undershot Wheels, and Driving Four pair of Stones.

A DWELLING-HOUSE,

Containing Four or Five Attics, Five Bed Rooms, Hall, Three Parlours, Kitchen, Pantry, Cellar, etc.; also a Counting-House, Cart Shed, and Workshop, and Piggeries, and, across the Road, a Three Stall Stable, Loft, Store Cellars, Barn, Bullock Lodge, etc., and

Sixty-two Acres, Two Roods, and Nineteen Perches,

Lying as follows:

No. on Plan.	Description	Arable	Pasture	A.	R.	P.	
17	Gravel Pit Close	Arable		11	1	38	
34	First Ploughed Close	ditto		10	1	23	
36	Part of Mill Marsh	Pasture		3	0	10	
37	Ditto ditto	ditto		13	2	31	
38	Garden			0	2	38	
39	Site of House and Garden			0	0	32	
40	Site of Mill, Outbuildings, etc.			0	2	31	
41	Little Home Close	Pasture		1	0	24	
42	Part of Willow Holme	ditto		6	2	8	
43a	Ditto ditto	ditto		0	3	26	
57	Great Home Close	ditto		10	0	15	
58	Outbuildings and Yard			0	1	5	
48a	Part of the Upper Willow Holme	Pasture		0	3	8	
	*Meadow adjoining, in Oundle			2	2	10	
				A.	62	2	19

* This meadow is subject to the Oundle Improvement Rate.

In the occupation of Mr. Compton, at a Rental of £270 per annum.

Figure 6 Extract from the 1858 Ashton Estate sales particulars, describing the mill and associated dwelling house (NRO ref ZB706/24)

- 3.17 Ashton Estate was purchased by Lionel Rothschild in 1860 and passed to his son Charles for use as a country home. Ashton was formed into a separate township in 1885 when the adjacent hamlet of Elmington was added to it. Ashton was rebuilt in 1900 for Charles Rothschild, to the design of an architect, William Huckvale. Pevsner described it as an "*emphatically model village. The cottages are also in the Tudor style, rock-faced and thatched. They were built with local materials and local labour. Great care was taken over the gardens. Also, every cottage, already in 1900, had a bathroom. All wiring is underground, an all too rare luxury which has a considerable effect on the undisturbed unity of a street or a village*" (Bailey et al 2013). Oundle did not develop industrial specialism during the post medieval period and was bypassed by 19th century rail links, thereby avoiding industrialisation and redevelopment and resulting in the preservation of its historic character.
- 3.18 The Grade II* Listed Ashton Mill (List Entry Number: 1040278) is located in close proximity to the Cottage and produced electricity for the village until 1948. The Listing description describes it as a late 18th century former water-powered corn mill, later adapted to form electricity generating and water pumping station for the Ashton Estate. The electricity and water supply systems were designed by Walter Morris Thomas, engineer for Lord Rothschild. It was related during this historic building survey that the building, although derelict, retains much of the historic industrial fixtures and fittings, described in the Listing as an exceptional survival. The building is predominantly constructed of brick and post-dates the cottages, however documentary evidence shows that there have been water mills at Ashton since at least the time of Domesday. The site of the mill site has therefore likely been used for this purpose since at least that time.
- 3.19 The Ashton Estate Map of 1860 (Figure 7) provides a very similar view to the 1858 map; no change is evident at the Mill and Cottages.



Figure 7 Ashton Estate map of 1860 (NRO ref 5173)

- 3.20 The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Figure 8) shows 1 and 2 Mills Cottages in approximately their present arrangement with the outbuilding on the north side of 2 Mills Cottage shown as a simple block. Extensions are shown at the rear of the building and a single porch is located at the access to no.1. The 1901 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 9) provides a greater level of detail of the outbuilding, showing it in its present arrangement of two ranges enclosing a yard and enclosed by a wall towards the road.



Figure 8 1:2500 First edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885

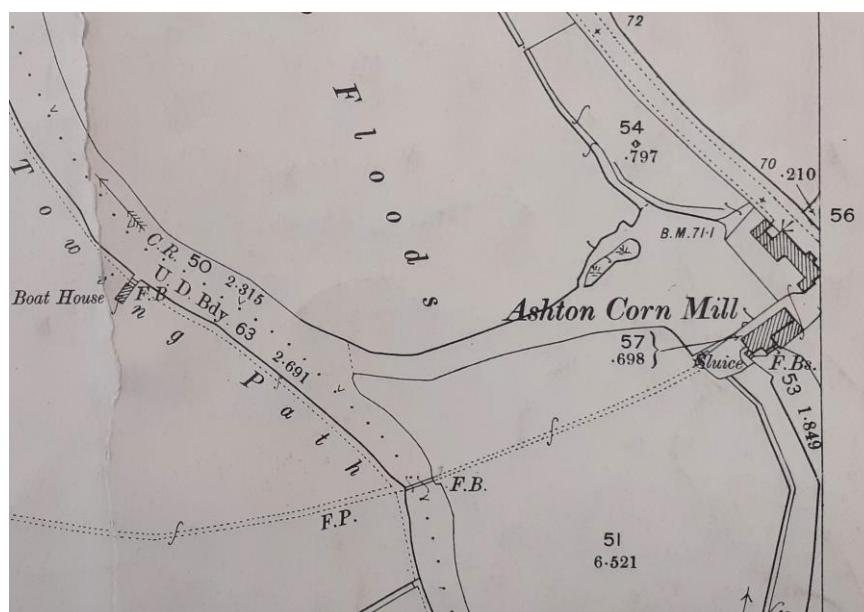


Figure 9 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1901



Figure 10 Modern watercolour view of the Mill and Mill Cottages depicted from the west side of the Nene (NRO p/8362)

4.0 Methodology

Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 The primary aims of the archaeological recording as described in the WSI were to produce an accurate record of the building prior to development.
- 4.2 The objective of Level 2 Building Recording is to provide a descriptive record of an extant structure in accordance with the Historic England procedural document of 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (HE, 2016). It will provide an account of the buildings' origins, development, and use but will not discuss in detail the evidence on which the analysis is based.
- 4.3 A comprehensive photographic record was carried out to ensure the preservation by record of the buildings prior to development. Existing architectural drawings including plans, section and elevations were checked for accuracy and annotated to include any evidence of changes to the fabric, structure, and layout of the building as well as any features of archaeological or architectural interest.

Methodology

- 4.4 The historic building recording was carried out on 5th September 2022. Recording included the following elements:
 - A photographic survey of the building to serve as a "baseline" record. This included an overall photographic survey of the building in its present condition comprising general and detailed shots taken using a Nikon D3500 camera and including photographic scales where appropriate.
 - A register of photographs was produced and is included as an appendix to this report (Appendix B).
 - Written notes on the building's construction, present and former use and where appropriate, the building's past and present relationship to their setting in the wider landscape.
 - Architectural survey drawings were checked for accuracy and annotated or expanded as necessary to include any evidence for alterations and phasing and any features of historic or architectural interest.
- 4.5 A visit was made to the Northampton County Archives to examine historic mapping, building plans, historic photographs of relevance to this report.

5.0 Building Description

- 5.1 Numbers 1 and 2 Mill Cottages comprise the two halves of a linear building located adjacent to Oundle Road (Figs 11, 12). The plan form comprises a rectangular footprint with extensions towards the rear. It is two-storied with attic and does not include a cellar.
- 5.2 A datestone of 1722 is located at the apex of the south-eastern gable (Figure 13). It is in the form of a square block of fine-grained limestone and includes two sets of initials I.M.C. and J.M.C. with the two C's being joined (*note that the Listing incorrectly states 1729*) (Fig 13). The datestone may represent the date of construction of the building, however it may also indicate a phase of renovation rather than original construction. It has been noted that such commemorative datestones may also record marriages which may also be accompanied by a phase of building renovation.
- 5.3 The principal elevation faces the road and is constructed of coursed limestone rubble with shaped ashlar quoins. It presents an irregular scheme of fenestration and the positions of several blocked windows are evidenced by defunct sills at first floor level. A possible multi-phased character may be evidenced by a change fabric at the northern third of the building where the stonework is a slightly different colour. This line of change coincides with the edge of a window above which there is a short vertical line which is not continued fully to the eaves. This change of fabric is also coincident with the position of a chimney, of which three are located along the ridge with the other two being at the gable ends.
- 5.4 The chimneys are of the same design being constructed of gault brick, rising from the roof to a short step and terminating at a dentilled crown. Two terracotta pots of various forms are installed on each chimney.
- 5.5 The current window scheme comprises tall sash windows, each with two-over-two lights with thin glazing bars and sash horns, indicating they post-date the mid-19th century. Several may be modern replacements in a traditional style. No.1 includes a modern projecting porch constructed of ashlar.
- 5.6 The north-west facing gable elevation is largely blank except for a doorway aligned with the hallway. The wall is constructed of regularly coursed rubble with dressed ashlar quoins and ashlar blocks lining the edges of the gable. A course of ashlar blocks spans the gable at mid-height. No evidence for formed blocked openings could be seen.

- 5.7 At the north-west corner of the main house is a large west-facing extension of similar construction to the main building (Fig 19). A chimney with four flues is located on the ridge, approximately central to the extension. The side walls are blank, however the gable end wall includes two sash windows at first floor level and a large sash and two smaller sashes at ground level. Of interest is the remains of a former doorway indicated by a flat stone lintel which is level with the lower part of the adjacent window (Fig 20). The height of this door suggests that a significant change of internal floor level has taken place. It was related by the present owners that during refurbishment works to the property, a series of stone steps were noted below the present floor level. Since the height of the sash windows conforms with the present floor levels, it confirms that the fenestration scheme is part of a later scheme of works and not original to the property. At the join between the extension and main house there are ashlar quoins visible of the north-west gable, which indicate that the extension is a later addition to the house.
- 5.8 At the north-west side of the building is a small courtyard surrounded and enclosed on two sides by linear rooms (Figs 21, 22). The group is approximately square in plan with the east and west sides measuring 7.4m and the north and south sides measuring 7.7m.
- 5.9 To the east the courtyard is bound by the gable end of the northern range which is connected to the house by a wall with a door for accessing the yard from the road (Fig 14). The wall and ranges appear continuous and contemporary. The east and north-facing walls of the northern range are constructed of gault brick, each measuring 220mm x 110mm x 70mm, with five courses measuring 390mm in height, and set in a coarse lime mortar (Fig 15). Many of the bricks show horizontal striations and skintle marks from their manufacturing process. The wall is capped with half-round coping bricks which form a well-built arch above the doorway. The wall butts up against the stone-built wall of the house.
- 5.10 The west-facing wall of the western range is constructed of coursed stone rubble into which the brickwork of the adjacent range is keyed (Fig 17). There appears to be a continuation of this stonework into that of the adjacent extension whose gable wall is flush with the smaller range. Internally there is a brick skin. This presents possible interpretations for phasing: the current courtyard ranges may be of two phases, one phase indicated by the stonework which appears contemporary with the extension and a second later phase in which brick-built ranges were created to replace or incorporate an existing structure or enclosing wall. The brick skin is also continued against the north side of the extension wall where it supports the ends of the roof wall plates.
- 5.11 Access to the courtyard from the west is via a single doorway in the west wall of the western range. The doorway and courtyard floor level are raised c30cm from the garden level and two steps rise to the door sill. The edges and sides of the door opening are lined with brick in a slightly untidy arrangement which suggests that the doorway is a later insertion (Fig 18). This in turn supports a two phased development of the courtyard ranges.

- 5.12 The exterior walls of the two ranges are blank except for one small window which lights a small WC. The two ranges share a common roof of grey slate with roll-top angle ridge tiles. The roofing form comprises machine-sawn pine common rafters meeting at a ridge piece and supported on timber wall plates (Figs 25, 28). The west range is partly open-fronted towards the courtyard and the wall plate is supported on a cast-iron column. This wall-plate is a re-used timber, likely a former spine beam, and includes shallow joist pockets on two edges (Fig 24).
- 5.13 The north range includes a storage room and adjacent utility room. A small WC is located at the north-west corner of the two ranges (Fig 30). The storage room is a roughly square space measuring 3m x 3.3m and includes a chimney breast with fireplace located centrally to the western wall (Figs 35, 36). The door is a four-panel door with thumb latch (Fig 37). A single casement window of two lights, each with six panes, opens into the courtyard. The window includes a small decorative cast or wrought iron latch (Figs 38, 39). The door and window share a continuous common timber lintel. The walls are white-painted brick and the underside of the roof is hidden under modern boards. The chimney breast is constructed of brick and there is a segmental arch over the fire opening. A modern wood burner is within the fireplace. The wall between the storage and utility rooms does not rise to fully partition the rooms, hence the modern ceiling over the storage room. The brickwork of the chimney seen above this wall appears relatively modern and it is possible that the chimney and partitioning wall are later additions to create two rooms.
- 5.14 Little of interest was noted in the utility room; the western wall is a full height partition wall that fully encloses the end of the range (Fig 31). The valley rafter for the roof turn is visible in this space (Figs 33, 34). Several of the common rafters include nail holes suggesting a former lath surface however it is possible that there has been re-use of the timbers used for construction. The door to the utility room is a simple plank and ledge door with thumb latch (Fig 32).
- 5.15 The WC appears to be of a contemporary construction with the brick ranges and is enclosed with gault bricks of the same type. Two short collars span between the feet of the common rafters to meet the end wall of the utility room above the entrance to the WC. Nothing of historic interest was noted in the WC (Fig 29).
- 5.16 The remains of a probable former copper (a historic water heater comprising a low brick structure with a vessel under which a fire could be lit or coals burned) can be seen at the south-east corner of the west range (Fig 26). These remains comprise two courses of brickwork forming a short plinth or platform. Immediately adjacent to this is a drain. Within the west range the floor is surfaced in red brick pavers.
- 5.17 The courtyard measures 3.6m x 3.8m and is surfaced with blue diamond pavers which terminate at a neat line inside the overhang of the west range (Fig 41). A drain is located on the south-east corner of the courtyard to take away water from the west range drainpipes and a further drain is located off-centre to the courtyard and may be a later insertion.

- 5.18 Access to the house is via a hallway which spans along the former external wall of the house, dividing the house and its extension. The courtyard door to the hallway is situated uncomfortably close to the former edge of the house which is defined by quoins such that accommodating the lintel has required the cutting back of the corner of one quoin. The door sill is raised c0.5m above the courtyard level and is accessed by three sets of stone steps. It is suggested in this report, though not confirmed, that the doorway may be a later insertion.
- 5.19 The ground floor space comprises a full width hallway which allows access to the living room, kitchen, snug room and staircase. The living room occupies a significant part of the house footprint whilst the sitting room and kitchen are both within the western extension. Little of historic interest is visible within the current rooms as the interior has been modernised.
- 5.20 The hallway measures 0.9m in width and is surfaced with modern engineered wood tiles. A modern scheme of skirting and door framing has been installed (Figs 42, 43). There are two doorways to the kitchen of which one has been blocked.
- 5.21 The living room is lit by two east-facing sash windows which have internal wooden shutters. A chimney breast projects into the room from the northern wall and wooden cabinets enclose the space to either side (Fig 48). The fire surround and cast-iron fireplace are modern installations in a traditional style. The floor is likewise modern engineered wood. The wall which divides the living room from the hallway is a plaster and timber stud wall (Fig 49) in contrast to the heavier walling elsewhere in the house and may be of a later date as supported by the apparently later insertion of the hallway door.
- 5.22 The snug room has a modern decorative scheme with modern fireplace and surround in a traditional style (Figs 46, 47). The floor is of modern engineered wood and the room has a modern skirting scheme in traditional style. The fireplace hearth is of red tiles. Due to plastering there is no evidence visible for a former doorway in the area of the sash window.
- 5.23 No historic features are visible in the kitchen which includes a fully modern layout and fittings (Figs 44, 45).

The proposed works

- 5.24 The design and access statement (Smithers Purslow, undated) states that the proposed works include the following:
- 5.25 To install a low-profile single ply roof with plateau roof light to create a habitable room out of the courtyard. Inside the outbuilding the rooms will be subdivided to form an office, WC and utility room with a door to the parking area and window to office. This will include the insertion of new doors, the blocking of a current door and insertion of a new wall adjacent to the current WC to increase the room size.
- 5.26 Within the house a timber stud wall will be removed and a door moved to create a staircase lobby on the ground floor. A masonry pier between two doorways will be removed to create an open plan kitchen and living room. A set of French doors with steps will be added to the rear elevation.

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1 The building comprising 1 and 2 Mill Cottages appears to originate in the early 18th century and can be demonstrated from documentary, historic map evidence, and on-site observation to have undergone various alterations during subsequent centuries. The earliest direct evidence for the construction is a datestone on the south gable which provides a date of 1722. 18th century map evidence does not provide detailed information about the building, however the present general arrangement of the mill and cottages was in place by at least 1810, and an outbuilding was present since at least this time. The building is situated in close proximity to, but predates, the late 18th century Ashton Mill. It is unclear whether the two buildings were part of a common complex of buildings or were separate properties.
- 6.2 The cottages have been extended towards the rear (west) and the facades show direct evidence for alterations to the fenestration through the blocking of earlier windows and installation of sash windows, likely in the mid to late 19th century. A blocked doorway on the west elevation, supported by observations made by the present owner during previous renovation works, demonstrates that the floor levels within the building have been raised. This alteration has affected the internal layout where the present division of rooms as well as their fixtures and fittings and decorative schemes appears to be relatively modern, matching the raised floor levels.
- 6.3 Historic mapping demonstrates that an outbuilding or ranges of outbuildings have been present at the north-west side of the building since at least 1810. Examination of the fabric provides evidence for a multi-phased character, with an earlier arrangement of walls or buildings characterised by coursed-stone walls, with a later phase in brick incorporating the earlier fabric. This earlier phase is only evident around the western walls of the current outbuildings; the main part of the structure including roofing appear to be of a single phase so likely replaced any earlier structures that may have been present. The survival of a base of a brick copper provides some indication as to the earlier function of the outbuilding as working ancillary rooms to the main house.
- 6.4 Within the outbuilding rooms various modern changes have taken place including pouring of concrete floors, creation of a modern toilet, and an undated insertion of a chimney which does not appear to be original to the 19th century phase.

7.0 Photographic Record



Figure 11 General view of Mill Cottages from Nene Way, looking south-east



Figure 12 General view of Mill Cottages from Nene Way, looking north-west



Figure 13 Detail of date stone with date of 1722 on south gable



Figure 14 The eastern courtyard wall and gable end of outbuilding

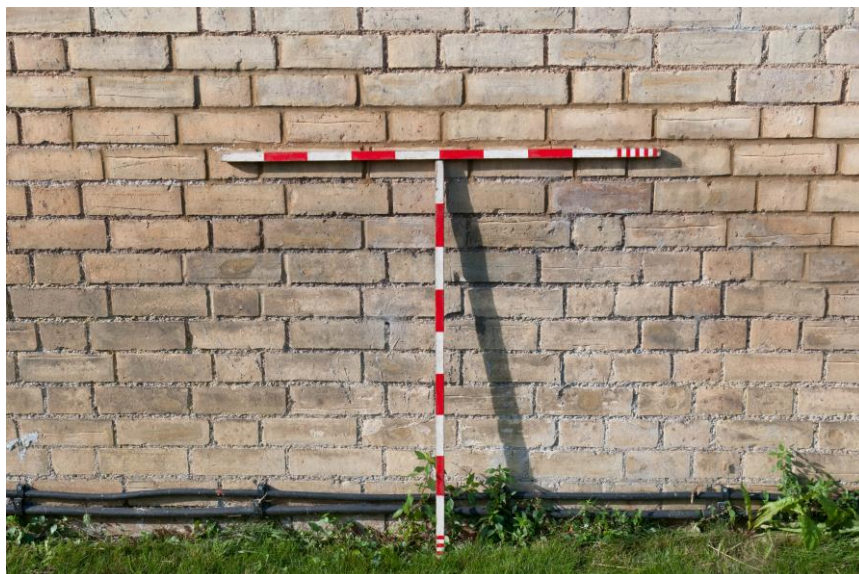


Figure 15 Detail of brickwork



Figure 16 North elevation of the outbuilding



Figure 17 The join of the north and west ranges showing change between stone and brick walls



Figure 18 Doorway with brick surround inserted into the stone wall of the west wall



Figure 19 The northern extension, looking east



Figure 20 Detail of blocked door with visible lintel adjacent to later sash window



Figure 21 View of the courtyard, looking east



Figure 22 View of the courtyard, looking west



Figure 23 Stepped entrance to the Hall. Note adjacent join to extension



Figure 24 Detail of cast iron column supporting a re-used beam



Figure 25 View within the west range, looking south



Figure 26 The remains of a former copper



Figure 27 The west range, looking south

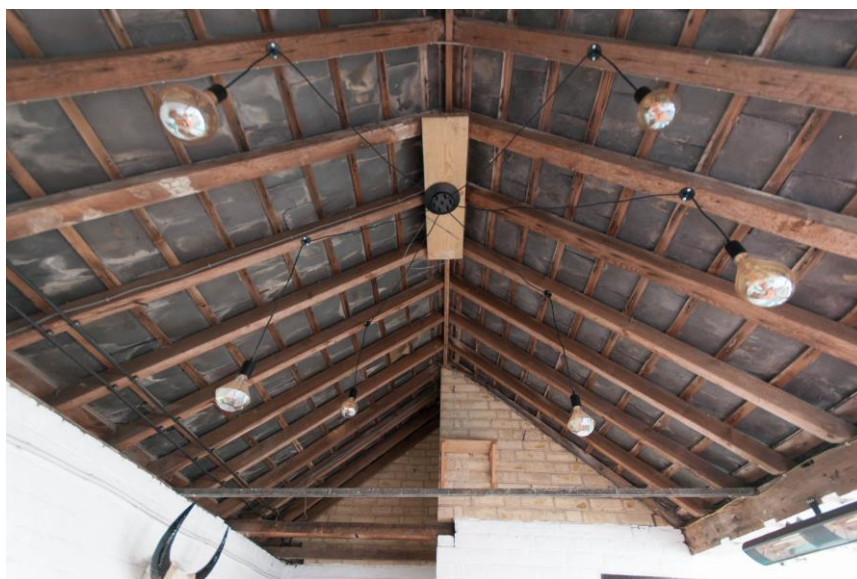


Figure 28 Detail of roof over the west range



Figure 29 The WC



Figure 30 View of the north range, looking north



Figure 31 The utility room



Figure 32 Detail of plank and ledge door to the utility room

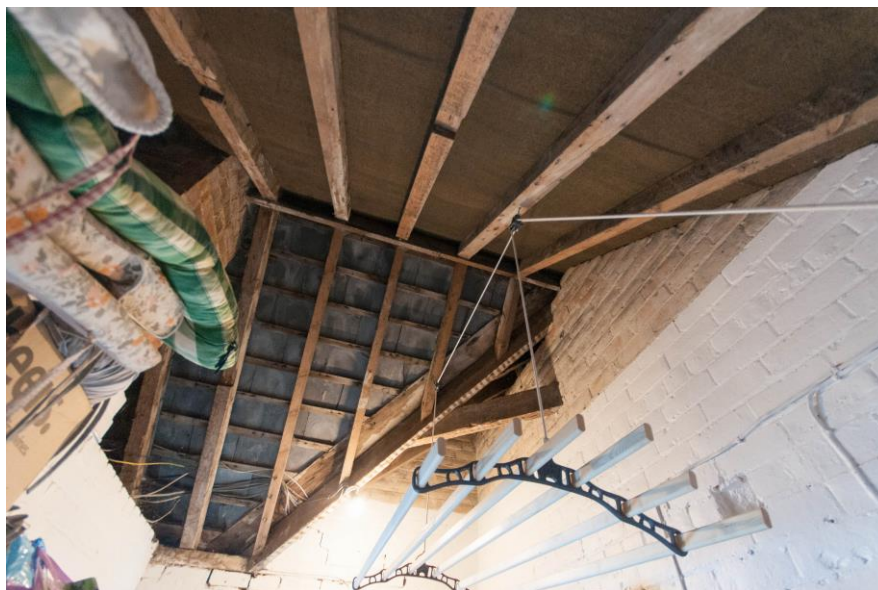


Figure 33 Change of roof direction between the north and west ranges



Figure 34 Chimney between the utility and storage rooms



Figure 35 The storage room, looking east



Figure 36 West wall of the storage room



Figure 37 Detail of door to storage room



Figure 38 Storage room window



Figure 39 Detail of window latch



Figure 40 Detail of floor surface in the west range

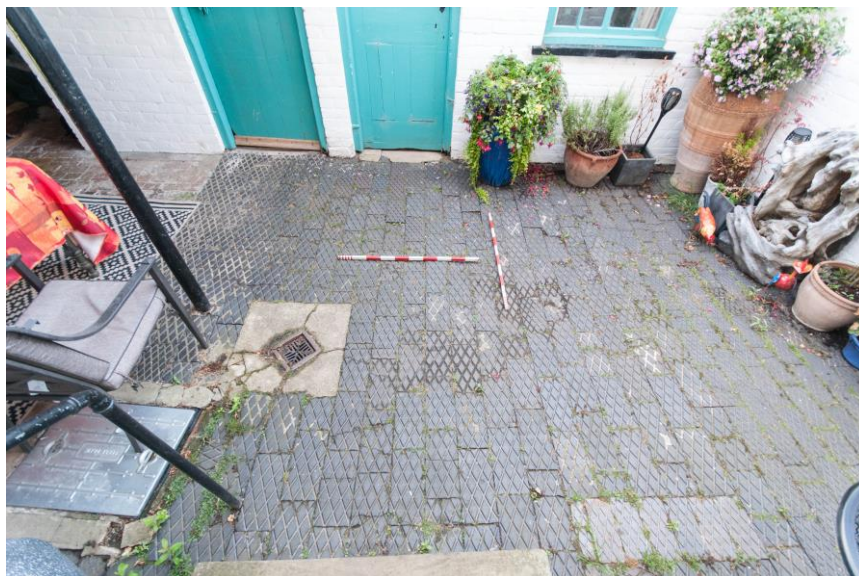


Figure 41 Detail of courtyard floor



Figure 42 View within the hall, looking south

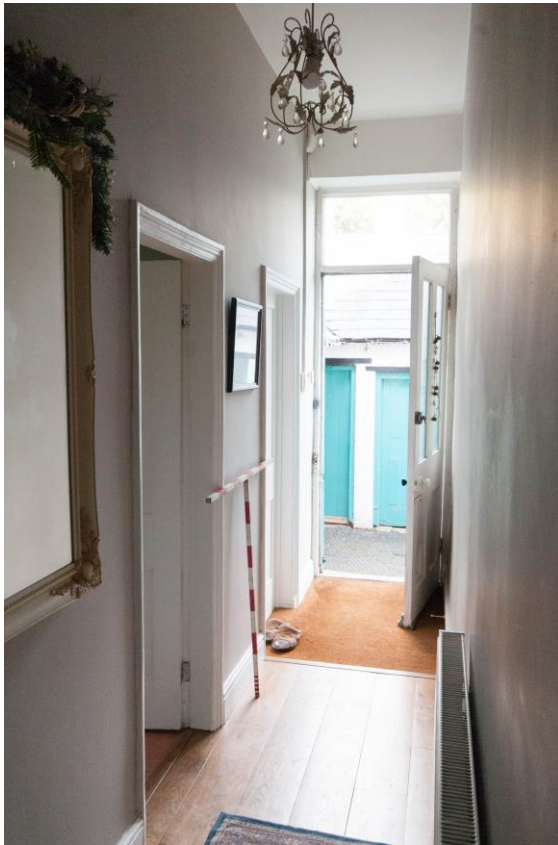


Figure 43 View within the hall, looking north



Figure 44 View within the kitchen



Figure 45 View within the kitchen, the east wall



Figure 46 The Snug, looking north-west



Figure 47 The snug, east wall, looking east



Figure 48 The living room, looking north



Figure 49 The living room, view of the west partition wall to the hall



Figure 50 Transition between hall and staircase at south end of the hall

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APPENDIX A: Drawings



KEY

- Site location



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Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date

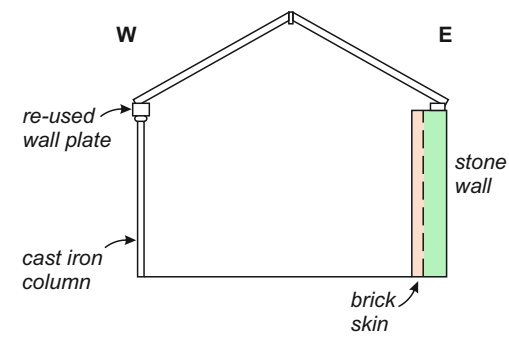
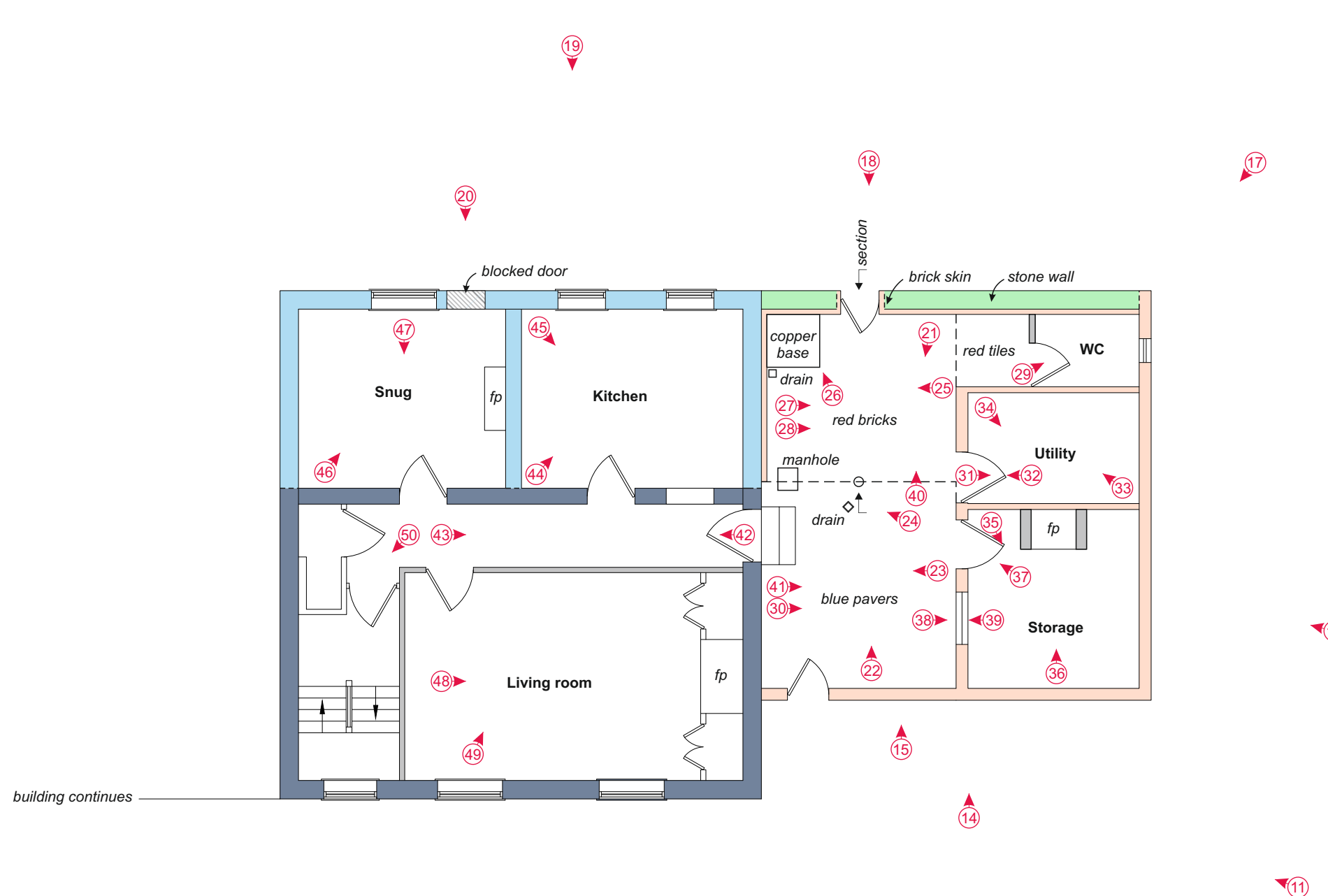
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Project:
2 Mills Cottage, Ashton

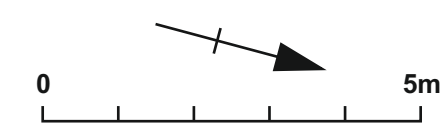
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Site Location Plan

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
AB	SA	JC	1:7,500 @ A3	26/08/2022



- Figure location
- Date uncertain, modern
- Early to mid 19th century brick rebuild of earlier outbuilding
- Date uncertain, early to mid 19th century remains of outbuilding
- Date uncertain, early to mid 19th century extension
- Early 18th century, 1722



Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date

THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP
Genesis Centre, Birchwood Science Park, Warrington WA3 7BH
 Tel 01925 844004 e-mail tep@tep.uk.com www.tep.uk.com

Project:
2 Mill Cottage

Title:
Plan of the house and outbuildings, showing figure locations

Drawing Number:
D9164.001

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
AB	-	JC	1:100 A3	11/10/22

APPENDIX B: Photographic register and contact sheets

2 Mill Cottage, Ashton

Photographic Register

05-09-2022

Nikon D3500, Nikon 10-20mm, 18-70mm Lens

File / Photo No.	Description
DSC7947	General view of the house from Nene Road, looking SW
DSC7494	West elevation of outbuilding
DSC7952	West elevation of outbuilding
DSC7955	Outbuilding chimney
DSC7957	Detail of brickwork
DSC7959	North elevation of house
DSC7963	Detail of datestone
DSC7964	General view of house, looking N
DSC7965	General view of house, looking NE
DSC7966	View of rear extension
DSC7967	the principal elevation
DSC7968	the principal elevation
DSC7971	the courtyard entrance
DSC7972	N elevation of the outbuildings
DSC7974	N and W elevations of outbuilding
DSC7977	View of outbuilding roof
DSC7979	W elevation of outbuilding
DSC7980	W entrance
DSC7981	The W elevation
DSC7984	View of the west extension
DSC7991	Blocked doorway on west extension
DSC7996	the courtyard, looking E
DSC7997	the courtyard, looking NW
DSC7998	Stepped entrance to house
DSC7999	Vertical join between house and extension
DSC8000	Courtyard surface
DSC8001	East courtyard wall
DSC8004	Courtyard, looking E
DSC8006	View in W range
DSC8009	View in W range
DSC8011	Roof structure at E range
DSC8012	E range, looking N
DSC8013	E range, looking N
DSC8014	Roof structure over E range
DSC8015	The WC
DSC8017	Utility room
DSC8019	Chimney and partition wall
DSC8020	Change of roof direction
DSC8022	Utility room
DSC8026	Storage room and fireplace
DSC8027	Storage room door
DSC8028	Storage room window
DSC8030	Storage room window
DSC8034	Storage room window latch
DSC8037	View of the N range
DSC8039	Detail of re-used timber
DSC8041	Detail of re-used timber
DSC8043	Join between N and E ranges
DSC8044	Detail of flooring
DSC8045	The hallway, looking S
DSC8048	The living room
DSC8053	The living room fireplace
DSC8056	The living room, E wall
DSC8057	The living room, E wall
DSC8058	The living room cupboard

DSC8060	The living room window
DSC8063	The hall, looking N
DSC8064	The hall, looking N
DSC8065	The kitchen, looking NE
DSC8067	The living room fireplace
DSC8068	The living room fireplace
DSC8069	The hall, looking S
DSC8070	The hall, doorway
DSC8071	The hall, skirting boards
DSC8072	Remains of copper
DSC8076	Storage room
DSC8079	Utility room door
DSC8081	Steps to hall
DSC8084	View of outbuildings from NW
DSC8086	Blocked door adjacent to sash window
DSC8090	General view of Kitchen
DSC8091	General view of Kitchen
DSC8092	Passage to stair
DSC8095	Kitchen door
DSC8097	Hallway floor
DSC8099	Hallway doors
DSC8100	The snug, E wall
DSC8101	View of the Snug
DSC8103	Storage room fireplace
DSC8104	The hall, looking S
DSC8110	The hall, looking N
DSC8112	Courtyard W range floor



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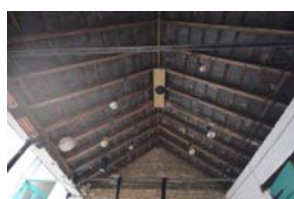
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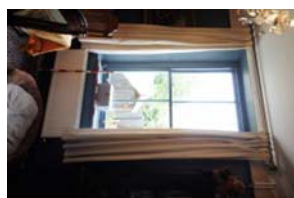
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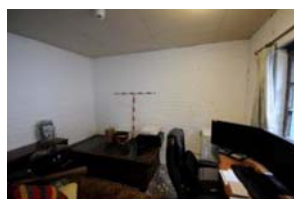
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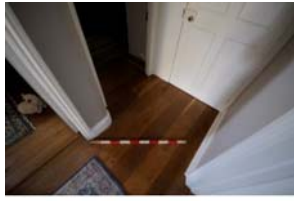
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