# **Offord Cluny**

## **Conservation Area Character Statement**







## October 2003

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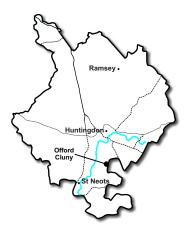
### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire has sixty-three Conservation Areas, designated for their "special architectural or historic interest". Designation is not an end in itself but the start of a process to preserve or enhance the Conservation Area's character or appearance, in accordance with the statutory duty of the District Council.
- 1.2 The character of a Conservation Area is defined not only by the surrounding buildings within it, but also by the pattern of the streets, open spaces and trees that separate them. In addition to normal Planning and Listed Building Controls, Conservation Area designation restricts certain minor developments which would normally be permitted to the residential property owner.
- 1.3 This Conservation Area Character Statement forms one of a series of statements that is adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan. The Local Plan contains policies relating to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, archaeological remains, trees and open space. The character statements

provide a basis for development plan policies and development control decisions within the Conservation Area.

### The Offord Cluny Conservation Area

1.4 Offord Cluny is situated in the south of the District midway between Huntingdon and St Neots. The village is located west of the River Great Ouse and lies adjacent to the main east coast railway line between London and the north. The Conservation Area was designated on 28th April 1980.





Ariel photograph showing the extent of the Offord Cluny Conservation Area boundary.

### 2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The settlement known today as Offord Cluny was recorded within the Domesday book of 1086 and referred to as Opeforde and Upeford. In the description it was noted there was a church at this time. The meaning for the name Offord was "Upper Ford", the settlement being the upper-ford of Huntingdon. The name Cluny is derived from the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy. At some point before 1086 the Abbey of Cluny was gifted the manor of Offord by Arnulf de Residing who had acquired the land following the Norman conquest of 1066.
- 2.2 In 1130 the manor was granted by charter to the Abbey of Cluny, "in pure and perpetual alms", by Henry I. It's believed that by this time the settlement had come to be known as Offord Cluny. The manor returned to English ownership under the Crown in 1342 during a period of war with France. In 1355 the manor reverted back to the ownership of the Abbey of Cluny only to return to English ownership in the early 15th century when the manor was purchased back from the Abbey of Cluny by Henry V.
- 2.3 Following the death of Henry V the manor of Offord Cluny was bequeathed to the Abbey of Westminster who leased out the lands. William Wright purchased the manor from the abbey in 1650 although following the restoration in 1660 the ownership of the manor passed back to the Abbey of Westminster once again. Around this time the manor house and estate became linked with the Deane family who, in 1704, were responsible for the building of the present Manor House, constructed on the site of an earlier property.
- 2.4 Historically the local economy is based on the farming of cereal and root crops, which were transported to market on barges on the Ouse. Prior to the 19th century crops were produced in communal fields where small holders farmed strips of land along side each other. In 1800, in line with national land reform, the Enclosure Act was passed in Offord Cluny. A new system of land division was introduced which ended the communal strip farming and introducing the division of land into enclosed fields.

2.5 The railway came to the area in the mid-19th century and the Buckden and Offord Railway Station, situated on the Great Northern line, opened in 1850. This provided a new mode of transport for the supply of goods to the area and the distribution of crops and soon resulted in the decline in use of barges on the river. The station which served the village for over 100 years closed in 1959. The line remains heavily used by trains running between London and the North.



Buckden and Offord station. The platforms and pedestrian bridge have been removed from the site following the closure of the station in 1959.

- 2.6 The first school to open in the village, in 1846, was funded through private money left by a Dr Newcombe. A new building to accommodate the school was constructed on High Street and this still survives but it is now a private dwelling. In 1970 schooling became compulsory but it was not until 1975 that a board school was constructed in Offord D'Arcy which would serve both villages. For a time in the late 19th century Fitz Farm was highly regarded as a boarding school for farm boys.
- 2.7 In 1923 the Diocese of Ely recommended that the neighbouring parishes of Offord Cluny and Offord D'Arcy be united and become the parish of Offord D'Arcy with Offord Cluny. This was actioned in 1927 when one rector began serving both parishes. The Rectory at Offord Cluny passed into private hands as the rector moved into the Offord D'Arcy Rectory. Both churches remained in use for services and each retained its own Parochial Church Council. In 1976 the church in Offord D'Arcy closed and All Saints Church, Offord Cluny now serves both villages.

### 3. THE CHARACTER OF OFFORD CLUNY

- (i) Offord Cluny is situated just north of the village of Offord D'Arcy. Both are noted within the Domesday Book, although they have evolved under different manorial ownership and both have a church and manor house. There is no visual distinction between the villages and the continuous stretch of High Street linking both gives the impression of one settlement.
- (ii) The origins of Offord Cluny date back to the medieval period and the character of the settlement reflects this. The Manor House has provided the centrepiece of the street scene since medieval times and fronts the principal road through the village.
- (iii) Offord Cluny is historically a farming community and this is reflected in the type of buildings within the village. A number of dwellings, for example, are former farmhouses. The presence of agricultural buildings fronting the High Street also contributes to the agricultural character of the village.
- (iv) Residential development has occurred throughout the village in the late 20th century. Much of this has been undertaken towards Offord D'Arcy, although some modern dwellings have been constructed along the High Street in Offord Cluny. More recent residential development has been undertaken on land behind High Street.

## 3.1 Offord Cluny Conservation Area

## (i) Listed Buildings

There are 18 listed structures within the Conservation Area, which have been listed by the Secretary of State as being worthy of protection because of their special architectural or historic interest. The majority of the buildings are Grade II listed, although All Saints Church is a Grade II\* listed building. The location of all the listed buildings is illustrated on Map A.

## (ii) Protected Trees

All trees within the conservation area boundary are protected by virtue of conservation area legislation. Some individual trees and groups of trees also have specific statutory protection by

way of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).



Brown Bonnett is Grade II-listed cottage, which fronts the High Street between New Road and The Cranny at the southern end of the village.

# MAP A - Constraints

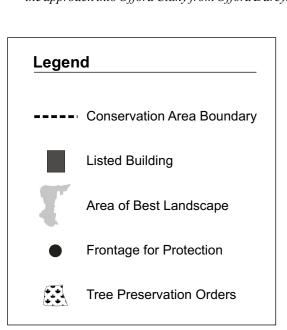
## **Listed Buildings**

The following elements of a Listed Building are protected, whatever its grade:-

- The whole building is protected, including its interior, external walls and roof, and fixed features such as windows and doors, staircases, plasterwork and fireplaces;
- Any object or structure physically attached to it such as a garden wall;
- Any free-standing building built within the curtilage which was erected before July 1<sup>st</sup> 1948, such as outbuildings, barns, garden structures and boundary walls.



19th century cottages abut the path to the street on the approach into Offord Cluny from Offord Darcy.





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### 4 STREET ANALYSIS

## 4.1 High Street

(i) The High Street curves gently as it runs north to south through Offord Cluny. The village has evolved as a linear settlement along High Street in a loose knit pattern of development. Property sits close to the roadside and the majority of buildings abut the footpath, although this is more apparent to the east side of the street. With the exception of the church all the listed buildings within the Conservation Area are located on High Street.



This map shows the settlement pattern of Offord Cluny in 1806. The linear character of the village is distinctive.

- (ii) Offord Cluny's historic development pattern is fundamental to the village's character. Recent backland development on land behind High Street, has had little regard to this characteristic and this has been detrimental to the character of the conservation area. Maintaining the integrity of Offord Cluny's historic development pattern will be a key consideration when determining future planning proposals.
- (iii) At the northern end of the conservation area there is a varied mix of building scales and ages. The loose nature of development and the presence of open space between buildings is distinctive to the setting of this part of the High Street. The road curves at the junction with Asplin Lane

creating a wide open junction which further enhances the open character of this area.



Whitwell Farm is in a prominent position on the corner of Asplin's Lane and High Street. The property closes the views along High Street when heading northwards through the village.

- (iv) Between Asplin Lane and Station Lane the presence of modern development has had a negative impact upon the quality of the streetscene. The density of development has had little regard for the importance of space between buildings and in addition to this the construction of these properties is incongruous with local architectural character.
- (v) The grade II listed red brick Manor House is the largest property within Offord Cluny. Occupying a central position on High Street the Manor House defines the streetscene in this part of the village. High red brick walls flank the property and serve to accentuate its prominence. Mature trees rising from within the grounds provide a backdrop to the building and also contribute to the setting of the street.



Manor House and the high red brick walls are in need of some repair.

(vi) An interesting element of High Street is the garden situated opposite Manor House and fronted by railings and red brick corner piers. This private garden fronting the street in the centre of the village has historical associations with the Manor House. These gardens enhance the setting of Manor House by providing pleasant open views from the front of the building.



The railings fronting the garden area are of an intricate design.

(vii) Mature trees are a notable feature of the streetscene around the central area of High Street. They mark a transition between the open character of the street in the north of the village and the increase in building density towards the southern end of the village as it adjoins Offord D'Arcy. The impact of the trees upon the streetscene varies between seasons and the character of the area is notably different between winter and summer.



In the winter months there is limited interest in the views down the central part of High Street.



The character of central High Street changes dramatically when the trees come in leaf and the road becomes enclosed by the overhanging foliage.

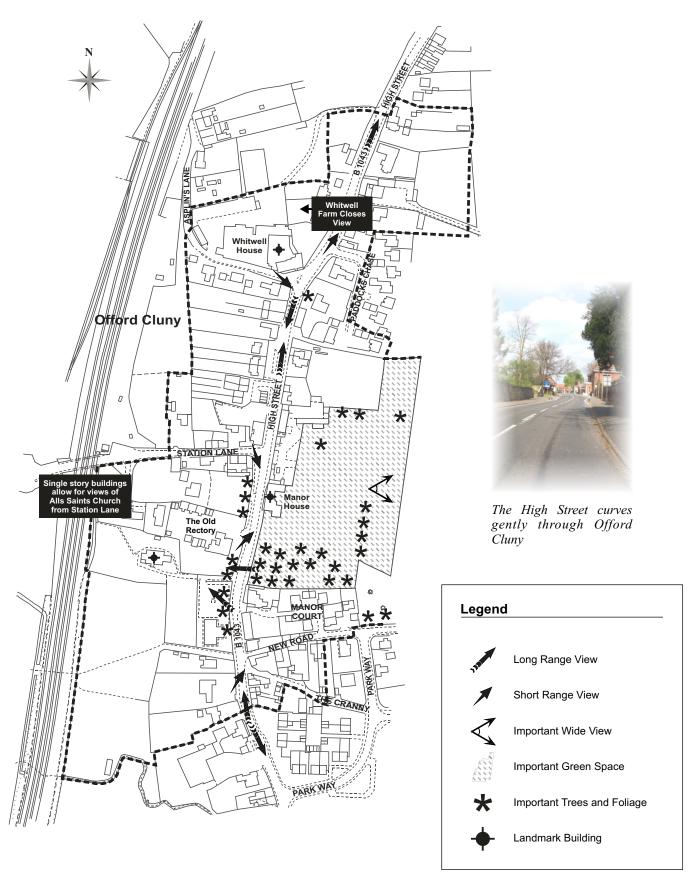
(viii) The village hall occupies a site on High Street towards the south end of the village. The hall dates to the 1960's and is of a style typical to that period but has little regard to local architectural character. A large car park serves the hall as well as the church and is situated adjacent to the High Street. The car park is currently tarmacked, although the area could be enhanced.



The undeveloped car park site allows for the only notable views of All Saints Church from the High Street.

(ix) At the southern end of the village, modest Victorian terracing and dwellings dominate the eastern side of the road. The solid sweeping building line and the absence of trees and foliage is in contrast to the scene on the opposite side of the road. To the western side of the road hedging fronts the footpath and the detached properties behind are set back from the street. Ivy Cottage a 17th century gable fronted property marks the boundary of the conservation area.

## MAP B - High Street



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(x) Throughout Offord Cluny modern concrete street-lighting provides the footpath and roadside illumination. Unfortunately the style of lighting detracts somewhat from the quality and character of the village's street scenes. A change in the style of lighting could be introduced that would enhance the setting and the views within the village.

## 4.2 Station Lane

(i) The road off the High Street, known as Station Lane, leads from Offord Cluny and out towards the village of Buckden. The village pub - The Swan is situated on the corner of Station Lane and High Street. The small length of road up to the railway track and crossing is included within the Conservation Area boundary.



The Grade II listed gates to Manor House close the view looking east along Station Lane.

- (ii) At the High Street end of Station Lane, late 19th century terracing abuts the pavement along both sides of the road. These properties enclose the street and are a notable element of its character. In contrast towards the railway crossing undeveloped land lies adjacent to the road. Mature trees sited on the undeveloped land hang over the road and retain the enclosed feel of the street scene.
- (lii) At the western end of Railway Lane towards the crossing views are afforded of the north elevation of All Saints Church through the mature trees. A number of modern dwellings have been built on land off Railway Lane although they have not restricted views of the church.



The replacement of traditional sash windows with PVCu has had a detrimental impact on the character of the Victorian terraces which front Station Road.

## 4.3 New Road and The Cranny

- (i) New Road and The Cranny are both narrow roads leading east off High Street at the southern end of the Conservation Area. Today these historic roads provide a link between High Street the modern housing estate off Park Way. The Cranny is slightly narrower in width than New Road and is now restricted to pedestrian access.
- (ii) Both roads provide rear access to some of the properties to the east of High Street. The garden walling and hedging abutting both roads convey a service character. There is limited residential development situated directly off these roads, although a number of modern dwellings have been constructed along New Road.

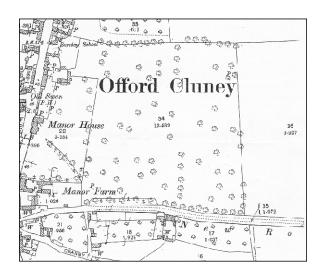


Foliage spilling over garden walls softens the character of The Cranny.

of

### 4.4 Manor House Grounds

- (i) Substantial private gardens serve the Manor House behind the property's extensive street frontage. The grounds are laid out in an informal manner of lawns surrounded by clusters of trees. These grounds enhance the setting of the house and reinforce its status as Offord Cluny's principal dwelling. Located within the grounds are a number of outbuildings. The outbuildings are characteristic of the style of outbuilding found in Huntingdonshire with distinctive Cambridgeshire pantiles to the roof.
- iii) The tree scattered meadow found east of the Manor House is also included within the conservation area. The meadow is bounded by New Lane to the south although views across the meadow are restricted due to the extensive tree coverage along the boundary. Mature Chestnut trees sited within the meadow are a historic feature of the landscape. It is also noted that there is evidence of surviving ridge and furrow within the meadow.



This map shows the Manor House and grounds in 1901. The trees identified within the meadow survive today.

(iii) The historic importance of the meadow derives from its association with the presence of a Manor House in Offord Cluny. In medieval times land immediately around a manor house was reserved for the personal use of the lord of the manor and this land was known as the demesne. It is considered that the meadow formed part of a demesne and the survival of this landscape feature reinforces the village's historic pattern development, which adheres to medieval origins.

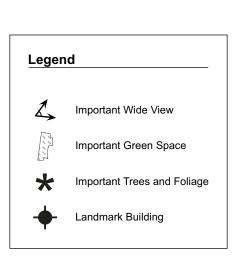


The immediate grounds of Manor House look out on to the meadow land behind.

## MAP C - Manor House and Grounds



Aerial shot of the grounds associated with the Manor House.





## 4.5 Churchyard and Meadow

- (i) The Church of All Saints is a Grade II\* listed building and is set back off the High Street to the rear of the Old Rectory. A driveway leading off High Street provides the main access to the church. The east coast mainline runs adjacent to the west boundary of the churchyard although this adjacent track and cabling is obscured by hedging and trees.
- (ii) The churchyard surrounding All Saints is primarily enclosed by hedging. Tombstones lined at right angles to the main path leading to the church and are a notable characteristic of the churchyard. The churchyard is well maintained which serves to enhance the setting of the church.



Opportunity for enhancement - A modern style street light sited within the churchyard detracts from the pleasant surroundings. An alternative style of lamp post should be found which will contribute more positively to the churchyard setting.

(iii) Beyond the churchyard to the south is open roughed grass meadow. The meadow contributes significantly to the setting of the church allowing open views of the south front of the church. Trees around the boundary of the meadow screen distant views out into the countryside although glimpses of the spire at St Peter's church in neighbouring Offord D'Arcy can be seen. (iv) Along the west boundary of the meadow the tree covering is limited. The railway and associated cabling are therefore notable in the views afforded out from the south front of the church across the meadow. It is noted that passengers on the trains can take advantage of the limited tree cover along the meadow boundary to obtain excellent views of the south front of All Saints Church as they pass by the village.

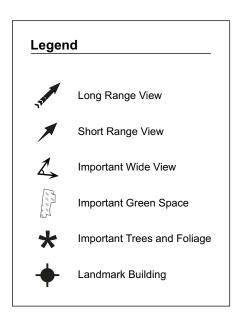


The hedging around the church along with the back drop of trees emphasise the church's rural location and contribute significantly to its setting.

## MAP D - Church and Meadow



Public footpath linking High Street and the meadow.





The lines of headstones are a significant feature of the churchyard

### 5. ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL

- (i) A significant number of the village's buildings date from the 17th century although they vary in status while examples of buildings from later periods of architecture are more limited. The mix in the architectural style and status of dwellings within Offord Cluny contributes to the character of the Conservation Area.
- (ii) With the exception of some 20th century development, there is consistency in the building materials used in the construction of properties. Historic building materials were predominantly locally sourced such as thatch and plain tile. Slate is common to buildings from the 19th century having been introduced to the area following the arrival of the railway.

## 5.1 16th and 17th Century Development

(i) The character of properties dating to the 16th and 17th century period ranges from the humble one and half storey cottage to larger two storey house. All these properties do, however, share common characteristics in their construction. All are of timber frame construction and have been rendered. Cambridgeshire mix plain tile remains the predominant roofing material although two of the cottages are thatched.



208 High Street - Timber-frame, rendered and thatched

(ii) There are common characteristics in the style of the one and half storey cottages in Offord Cluny. All have loft accommodation with gable loft windows and dormers. The dormers to the thatched properties are of a gabled style, however, a small flat roofed dormer is noted on one property. The central stack detail is also a feature common to this period of build as is the casement style window.



207 High Street - Timber-frame, rendered and tiled (The introduction of modern tile to the roof of Inglenook cottage is detremental to the distinct character of local roofing)

(iii) There are a number of higher status farmhouses in the village which date back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Manor Farmhouse is notably the earliest surviving property in the village dating to the late 16th century. The gabled frontage of Ivy Cottage is of early 17th century construction.

These higher status buildings would have been built by the wealthier class of yeoman who lived in the area.



*Ivy Cottage - timber-frame, rendered, peg-tiled.* 

## 5.2 18th Century Development

(i) The most notable building constructed within Offord Cluny in the 18th century is the Manor House. Manor House is constructed in warm red brick, which is characteristic of large houses of this period and also a common building material in the south of Huntingdonshire. The roof is of Cambridgeshire mix peg tiles. The windows are six over six pane vertical sashes. The sash window was only seen in the most fashionable houses of the early 18th century.



The Coach House associated with the Manor House is a Grade II listed building. The building dated back to the 18th century although alterations to introduce the hipped slate roof were undertaken in the 19th century.



The gate piers marking the entrance to Manor House are listed. Unfortunately they are in need of some repair where damage has occurred to areas of the brickwork and the finials.

(ii) 177 and 201 High Street date to the early 18th century. While both properties appear very different, notably 177 High Street is of one and half storeys and 201 High Street is a two storey property they do share common characteristics. Both properties are constructed in locally sourced materials notably red brick and Cambridgeshire mix plain tile. The window style is side hung casements.



Whitwell Farm -18th century with 19th century alterations - red brick and red peg tiles

## 5.3 19th Century Development

(i) From around the 19th century onwards local Gault bricks began to replace the red bricks in the construction of dwellings. 188 High Street is an example of a property constructed in local Gault brick and dates to the turn of the 1800's. Gault brick became the most common building material of 19th century although red brickwork was still used occasionally.



The Old Vicarage - 19th century - Gault brick and Cambridgeshire mix tile.

(ii) Within Offord Cluny there are a number of Victorian terraced cottages of Gault brick construction. These properties date from the mid to late 19th century and it is notable that the roof material used in construction is slate as opposed to the locally sourced plain tile common to early buildings. Red brick detailing has been used on the terraces on Station Lane a style common to buildings of the late Victorian period. The sash window is also common to these later properties.

## 5.4 Modern Development

(i) Since the late 20th century pockets of modern development have been undertaken within the Conservation Area. The quality of modern construction within the village varies from poor quality building of the 1970's which have had little regard to local materials to recent developments which have considered local character.



The modern development known as Paddock Chase has been undertaken using building materials typical of the character of Offord Cluny.

## 5.5 Agricultural Buildings

The presence of agricultural buildings within the streetscene accentuates the important role of agriculture to the village. Two notable 17th century barns survive on High Street. There is a distinct character to these barns which are of weatherboard construction. The roofing to the barn at Fitz Farm is corrugated iron. The barn south of Manor House has been converted to a dwelling and the roof material changed to modern tile.



Barn at Fitz Farm - Weatherboarded with iron roof

### 6. SUMMARY

- (i) This document has provided a review of the essential characteristics of the Offord Cluny Conservation Area. Certain key elements are fundamental to the character and appearance of the area and can be summarised as follows:
- (ii) The linear settlement pattern is important to the historic character of the village. Development which will result in the future erosion of this element of the village's character will be resisted.
- (iii) The Manor House and associated buildings are a defining element of High Street, although it is the variety of domestic properties within the village that contribute to its overall character.
- (iv) There is a consistency in the use of building materials used in the construction of historic properties in Offord Cluny. Materials common to historic buildings include:

Timber-frame

**Brick** 

Plain Tile

Slate

Thatch

Rendered Frontages

- (v) The grounds and land associated with the Manor House are of historic importance. They are important to the both the setting of the house as well as the wider character of the village.
- (vi) The open views afforded of the south front of the church are distinctive to the church's character. The contribution the meadow makes to the setting of the church should not be prejudiced.
- (vii) The presence of mature trees around the church, the meadow, and towards the central focus of the village contribute significantly to the character of the village.
- (viii) Protecting the special character of the Offord Cluny Conservation Area will be of benefit to local residents, visitors and future

generations. For more information and advice please contact a member of Planning Services at Huntingdonshire District Council.

Tel: 01480 388424 Fax: 01480 388472

E mail: PlanningPolicy@huntsdc.gov.uk

#### Annex 1

## **Archaeological Statement: Offord Cluny**

This archaeological record looks towards the presence of archaeological remains in Offord Cluny. The underlying geology of the village core is pleistocene gravels which overlay clay. The underlying geology of the remaining parish is is clay.

There is limited archaeological evidence available for Offord Cluny, with only 12 entries appearing in the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record. This existing archaeological record is as follows:

### The Archaeological Record

#### **Prehistoric**

Prehistoric evidence for the parish is sparse although a palaeolithic implement was found at Offord Gravels to the north of the village. Bronze Age finds have been recovered as chance finds from the village core.

Some remains recorded during recent archaeological investigations at 177 High Street were interpreted to be prehistoric, although no artifactual evidence was recovered.

#### Roman

The course of the Godmanchester to Sandy Roman road runs North-South through the parish, although no archaeological evidence exists to identify the exact course of the road.

Crop marks of ring ditches and enclosures which have been identified from ariel photographs and may represent the remains of a roman settlement. No finds have been recorded from this period.

### **Anglo-Saxon**

No early Saxon evidence is known for Offord Cluny. During the recent archaeological investigations at 177 High Street evidence of 11th and 12th century Saxo-Norman ditches were found although the lack of artefactual evidence makes the interpretation uncertain.

#### Medieval

There is evidence of ridge and furrow remains to the east of Manor House, although these are rather indistinct. No finds have been recorded for this period.

The name Offord was first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, meaning Upper Ford. By the 13th century the name Cluny was appended, to indicate ownership by the monks of Cluny in Burgundy. The fabric of the parish church of All Saints dates back to the 13th century in parts. The church was mentioned in the Domesday Book, although nothing survives from this period.

For further information please contact the County Sites and monuments record at Cambridge County Council:

Box ELH1108 Cambridgeshire County Council Shire Hall Cambridge CB30AP

Tel: 01223 717312 Fax: 01223 362 425 E mail: CAO@cambridge.gov.uk