

## Orion Heritage

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Chesham Bois Parish Council  
Council Office  
Glebe Way  
Chesham Bois  
Buckinghamshire HP6 5ND

FAO: Jonathan Harbottle

11 March 2020

Our ref: PN2289/Heritage Response

Dear Jonathan,

**Re: Planning Application Ref: PL/20/0401/FA for redevelopment of St. Leonards Parish Centre to create a new multifunctional Parish Centre with cafe, day nursery building, replacement rectory with detached garage, additional staff dwelling, 2 outbuildings to provide prayer room and substation/bin and bicycle store, associated parking and landscaping**

### Background

We write with reference to the above planning application, with specific focus on the heritage aspects of the proposal. As instructed, we have reviewed the relevant background documentation associated with the proposal including the Heritage Assessment prepared by Cotswold Archaeology (December 2019), the current layout plans attached to their report and we have provided some preliminary comments on their conclusions below. We have also reviewed the landscape plans and street views prepared as part of the application documentation.

We broadly concur with the conclusions reached in the Cotswold Archaeology assessment, but would add that the materiality of the new buildings will be important, particularly where elements are glimpsed from North Road and Glebe Way. A muted materials palette that resonates with the surrounding landscape will ensure that, where elements of the new build are glimpsed in visual terms, they will not be overly prominent in this context. Additionally, there is no discussion in the assessment relating to the design of the larger Parish Centre building, in particular i.e. its form and materiality and how this sits in the context of glimpsed views from Glebe Way, for example. This is of particular importance, given the large footprint of this building and the sculptural design approach outlined in the earlier consultation



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documentation (March 2019). It is noted, however, that the street views prepared as part of the application documentation appear to show that this building is understated and visually recessive, when viewed from Glebe Way.

Each of the heritage assets identified is discussed in turn below. These include the Chesham Bois Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings in the immediate vicinity of the application site. The Grade II listed 'Old Rectory' (NHLE no. 1239048) and the Grade II listed 'Old Stables Block to east of Old Rectory' (NHLE no. 1273888) are both located to the north-west of the application site.

### **Identified impacts on the setting of heritage assets in vicinity: Orion Heritage response**

In terms of the heritage implications of the proposal, the key issue to be addressed is the degree to which the setting of the heritage assets identified within and in the vicinity of the application site would be impacted and if this would be acceptable in the context of the planning benefits coming forward.

As noted, the proposal is supported by a Heritage Assessment (Cotswold Archaeology, December 2019) which considered the potential impacts of the proposal on the settings of the heritage assets in the vicinity, with particular reference to the Chesham Bois Conservation Area and the Grade II listed 'Old Rectory' and the Grade II listed 'Old Stables block to the east of the Old Rectory', given their proximity to the application site. Note that the location of the Old Rectory appears to be incorrectly shown in the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) mapping, which is maintained by Historic England (i.e. the blue triangle identifying the designation is shown on the more contemporary Rectory structure). This designation, however, is correctly identified in the Heritage Assessment prepared by Cotswold Archaeology.

#### ***Chesham Bois Conservation Area.***

The existing Parish Centre (Keepers Cottage) has a generous set-back from North Road and, combined with its restrained scale and muted materiality has limited visual prominence within the Conservation Area designation (i.e. only its pitched roof is evident in views from North Road). The proposed Rectory building will be sited further north towards North Road and, for this reason, will be more visually evident as noted in the Cotswold Archaeology assessment, which further notes that the first floor and roof of the new building will be visible above the boundary hedge line. The assessment concludes that this will introduce a minor change to the appearance of the Conservation Area, given the current site conditions (i.e. visibility of the roof to the existing Parish Centre) but that there would not be any harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. We agree with the conclusions reached but acknowledge that there will be an increase in height when compared with the existing Parish Centre (1.2 metres approx.), which combined with the siting of the proposed building further north towards North Road will have a degree of prominence. The existing natural screening along the northern boundary of the application site and the additional proposed tree planting to the immediate north-west of the proposed Rectory building will assist in mitigating its visual apparentness in this context. For this reason and subject to a muted materials palette being used (the upper storey shown in the street view visuals appears garish when viewed from North Road), this element will not be overly evident visually. Similarly, the proposed dwelling adjoining the north-west boundary of the site will be adequately screened and only glimpsed from a number of vantage points. It is recommended, that the materials palette is carefully conditioned to ensure that this building is as visually recessive as possible.

The proposed Parish Centre building will occupy a larger footprint in the south-east of the application site in close proximity to Glebe Way. As the Cotswold Archaeology assessment notes, this part of the site is largely screened by substantial areas of vegetation to the east and south-east. We agree that the additional natural screening to the north of the proposed building will impede any direct views from North Road, with additional plantings to the east strengthening the existing natural screening to the east along Glebe Way. For these reasons we concur with the Cotswold Archaeology conclusions that the proposed Parish Centre building would not be visually apparent in the context of the Conservation Area designation. As noted above, there is no discussion with reference to the form and materiality of the proposed building and this would be useful given that the building will be evident in a number of glimpsed views from Glebe Way. The permeable nature of the proposed gravel parking and circulation areas within the site are also such that this aspect of the proposal will resonate with the landscape attributes of the designation and, given the natural screening both within and along the boundary of the site, will not be overly evident visually.

### ***Listed Buildings in immediate vicinity***

Both the Old Rectory and the stable block to its east are Grade II listed, with both having some legibility from North Road, although it is acknowledged they have a substantial set back from North Road, with only glimpsed views across the grass verge that exists to their north. The Cotswold Archaeology assessment correctly notes that the Old Rectory is best appreciated in glimpsed views from North Road. It is also noted that the existing natural screening between the Old Rectory/stable to its east and the application site to the east will remain in place, with strengthening of this vegetation, thereby ensuring that any potential inter-visibility between the heritage assets and the new buildings within the site is limited. In this regard, we agree with the conclusions reached that there will be no harm to the setting of the heritage assets. While the proposed dwelling in the north-west part of the site is located in close proximity to the listed stable, it is unlikely that it will visually impact the setting of the latter, given the existing natural screening between the heritage asset and the orientation of the proposed dwelling to the north-east.

### **Summary**

In summary, we broadly concur with the conclusions reached in the Cotswold Archaeology Heritage Assessment. The new development will be at its most prominent in views from North Road, given the marginal increase in height to this frontage when compared with the existing Parish Centre. While the siting of the proposed building further north towards North Road will have a degree of prominence, the existing natural screening along the northern boundary of the site and the additional proposed tree planting to the immediate north-west of the proposed Rectory building will assist in mitigating its visual apparentness in this context.

Similarly, we concur with the Cotswold Archaeology conclusions that the proposed Parish Centre building would not be visually apparent in the context of the Chesham Bois Conservation Area designation. While this building will occupy a large footprint, it is of a recessive scale and design, with the existing and proposed natural screening largely concealing it from street view. As noted, there is no discussion with reference to the form and materiality of the proposed building and this would be useful given that the building will be evident in a number of glimpsed views from Glebe Way. In this regard, the materiality, in particular, will need to be carefully conditioned as part of any permission to ensure that it is visually recessive and understated in the context of the important attributes of the designation.

With reference to the listed buildings in the immediate vicinity we agree with the conclusions reached that there will be no harm to the setting of these heritage assets, given the existing natural screening that exists.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Chris Colville".

Chris Colville  
**Principal Consultant (Built Heritage)**  
Orion Heritage Ltd.