

**Proposed Village Hall, Park Lane,**  
**Cherhill, Wiltshire. Statement of**  
**Significance and Heritage Statement.**



**JME Conservation Ltd.**

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# JME CONSERVATION

Tel 01225 480 786  
Mobile 07905 019 178



E-mail: [Judy@jmeconservation.co.uk](mailto:Judy@jmeconservation.co.uk)  
Web [www.jmeconservation.co.uk](http://www.jmeconservation.co.uk)

## **Research parameters:**

This Statement of Significance and Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a Community Right to Build Order for the erection of a replacement Village Hall on the eastern edge of the village of Cherhill in Wiltshire. The proposed site lies just outside the Cherhill Conservation Area, and there are glimpsed views of a listed building, Tudor Cottage, to the north and Bell Farm and its associated farm buildings which are non-designated heritage assets to the west. The village lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) at the foot of Cherhill Down, part of a prominent escarpment of chalk downland which is important for its chalkland flora, fauna and archaeology including substantial earth-work remains notably Oldbury Camp and the Cross Dyke both of which are scheduled monuments. The Down also contains the more recent grade II\* listed Lansdown Monument and the equally prominent White Horse (a non-designated heritage asset).

The purposes of this statement are firstly to provide an assessment of the significance of the affected heritage assets, (including the contribution made by the development site to their settings and significance), and secondly to assess the impacts of the development proposals upon their significance and setting. The statement also considers their contribution to the landscape and natural beauty of this part of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The statement does not provide a detailed appraisal of the affected heritage assets whose setting are affected by the development. It provides a proportionate assessment of their settings and significance and assesses the impacts of the proposed development on their settings and significance. It is based upon a visual assessment supported by sufficient documentary research to elucidate the results of the visual assessment. A full examination of documentary and other sources has not been undertaken.

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JME Conservation Limited Registered Company No 7480523 Registered office No 21, St. Thomas Street, Bristol BS1 6JS  
Directors: JM Enticknap BA Hons TP, MA Conservation Studies, IHBC;  
D Haigh BA Hons Arch & Ancient Hist, MA English Local History, AA Grad Dip Cons, IHBC, FSA Scot,

## **Proposed Village Hall, Park Lane, Cherhill, Wiltshire. Statement of Significance and Heritage Statement.**

### **Brief description of the proposed site of the Village Hall and its setting:**

The village of Cherhill lies approximately four km to the east of Calne on the edge of the Cherhill Downs, which lie within but at the north-western edge of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The village is sited on the north side of Main Road, which forms part of the A4, and was the old coaching road between Bristol and London; and to the north, west and east of the village, it is surrounded by a mix of open arable fields and pasture defined by mature hedgerows. On the south side of Main Road and separated from it by open arable fields is the northern scarp slope of Cherhill Down some 0.9km to the south. The chalk downs are covered in rough grass and rise to a height of 262m, which is marked by the Lansdowne Monument. There are long distance views from the scarp slope westwards across the wide valley of the River Avon and its tributary, the River Marden.



Fig 1, View of Cherhill Down, with the White Horse on the left and the Lansdowne Monument on the right. The earthwork remains of Oldbury Camp are visible on the skyline.

The long history of grazing on this fertile agricultural has preserved evidence of settlement going back to pre-historic times with numerous burial mounds, Oldbury Castle hillfort, and pre-historic field systems. More immediately apparent are the Cherhill White Horse, cut into the chalk in 1780, and the imposing Lansdowne Monument, dating from 1845, both of which are set within the “bowl” formed by the scarp slope



of Cherhill Down which faces northwards overlooking the development site and the village beyond. These archaeological remains and the prominence of the scarp slope within the wider landscape contribute to the special landscape character of the Cherhill Down as does the ecology of the Chalk grassland; and to Cherhill's setting.



Fig 2, View north from Cherhill Down towards the village which forms a nucleated settlement bounded on the north by woodland along Rivers Brook and on the south by the A4, The site is the pasture just beyond the A4.

The village is set on undulating ground at the foot of the scarp slope and has a broadly rectangular settlement plan defined by narrow often sunken lanes bounded by mature hedges forming plot boundaries. The principal streets run east-west with



Fig 3, The village is characterised by narrow Lanes and vernacular buildings set within plots enclosed by mature hedgerows. Maiden Lane is on the left and the church of St James is out of sight on the right.

The Street on its northern side, and Main Road (the A4) running parallel to it on the south side of the village. In between is Middle Lane which runs eastwards through the western half of the village. Three narrow lanes, Olivers Hill, Maiden Lane and Park Lane, run at right-angles through the village and house plots are largely defined and screened by hedgerows which help contribute to the special character of the Conservation Area. A stream, Rivers Brook, has cut down through the chalk to form a small steeply sided valley with tree covered slopes, and woodland which forms the northern boundary of the village.



Fig 4, View from the north side of the village looking through the woodland along Rivers Brook towards Upper Farm with the Lansdowne Monument beyond. The chalk escarpment is a constant visual presence to the south.

The historic core of Cherhill is at the eastern end around the Grade II\* listed church of St James and the manor house. This part of the village contains a fine group of one and a half storey thatched and rendered (or limewashed chalk) dwellings set within large sites which date mainly from the 17th century and were probably occupied by yeoman farmers. Several of these plots have subsequently been subdivided and infilled, although the mature hedgerow boundaries which characterise this part of the village have been retained, and make a valuable contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The west part of the village has a denser pattern of development with more 19th and 20th century infill.

The southern boundary of the village fronting the Main Road (the A4) has more widely spaced development most of which is aligned onto the road frontage and it appears to have developed to serve the needs of travellers. Historically there were four coaching inns along the road including the former Bell Inn, which is now Bell Farmhouse on the corner of Main Road and Park Lane. This inn, which is late 18th century in date, was converted to a farmhouse in the late 19th century, when the (now converted) farm building complex was erected to the north and the former stables on the east side of Park Lane were demolished



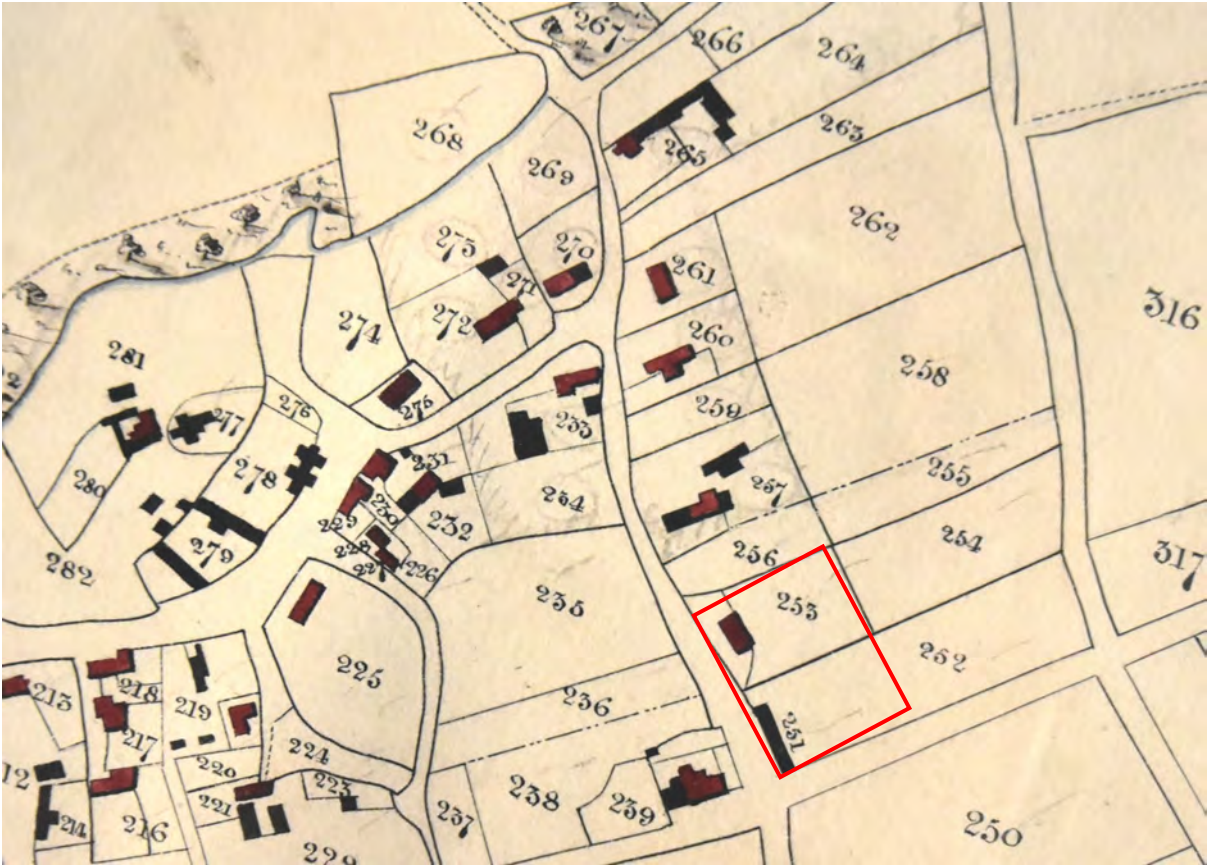


Fig 5. The site in 1843. Plot 253 is described as a house and land. Plots 251 and 252 are stables and land belonging to the Bell Inn. Note at this date Park Lane joins the main road at a crossroads adjacent to the Bell Inn.

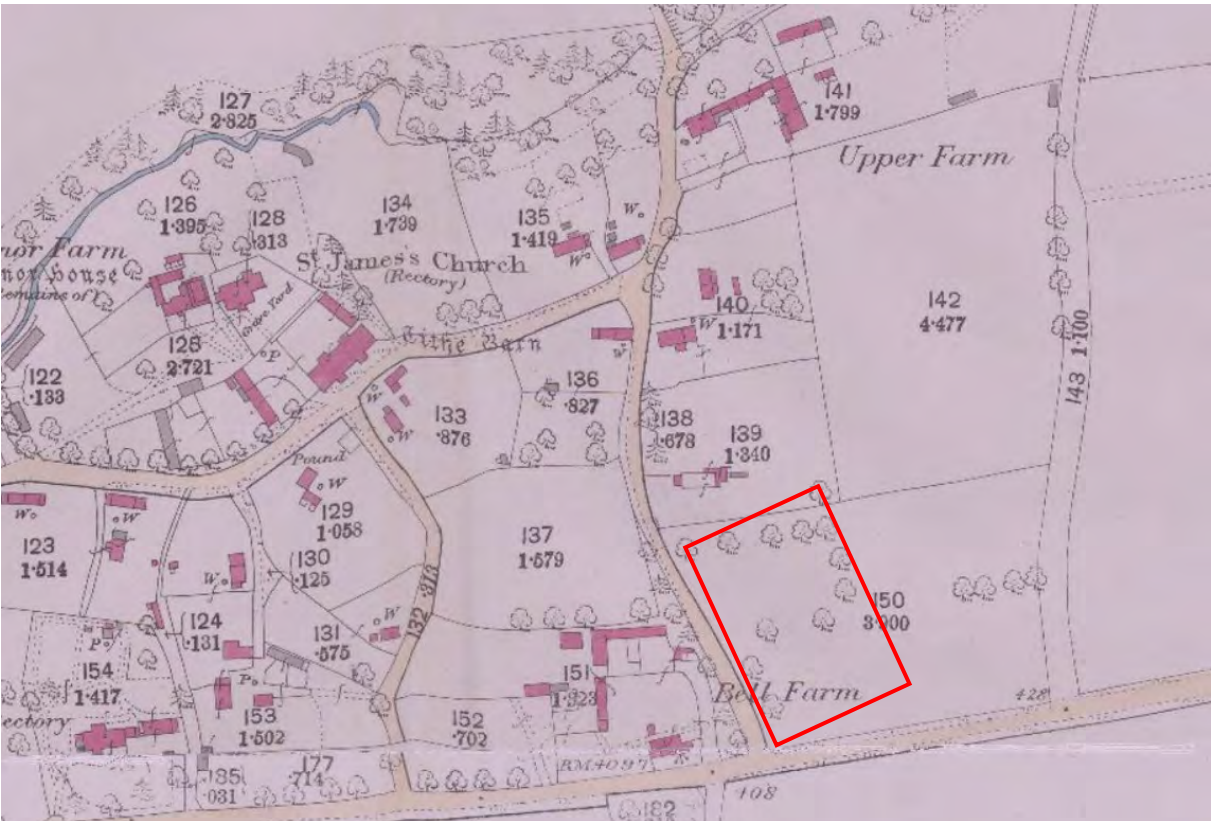


Fig 6, The site in 1884 on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. Note that Park Lane has been diverted so that it joins the A4 (Main Road) further east whilst the stables and adjacent house have been demolished.

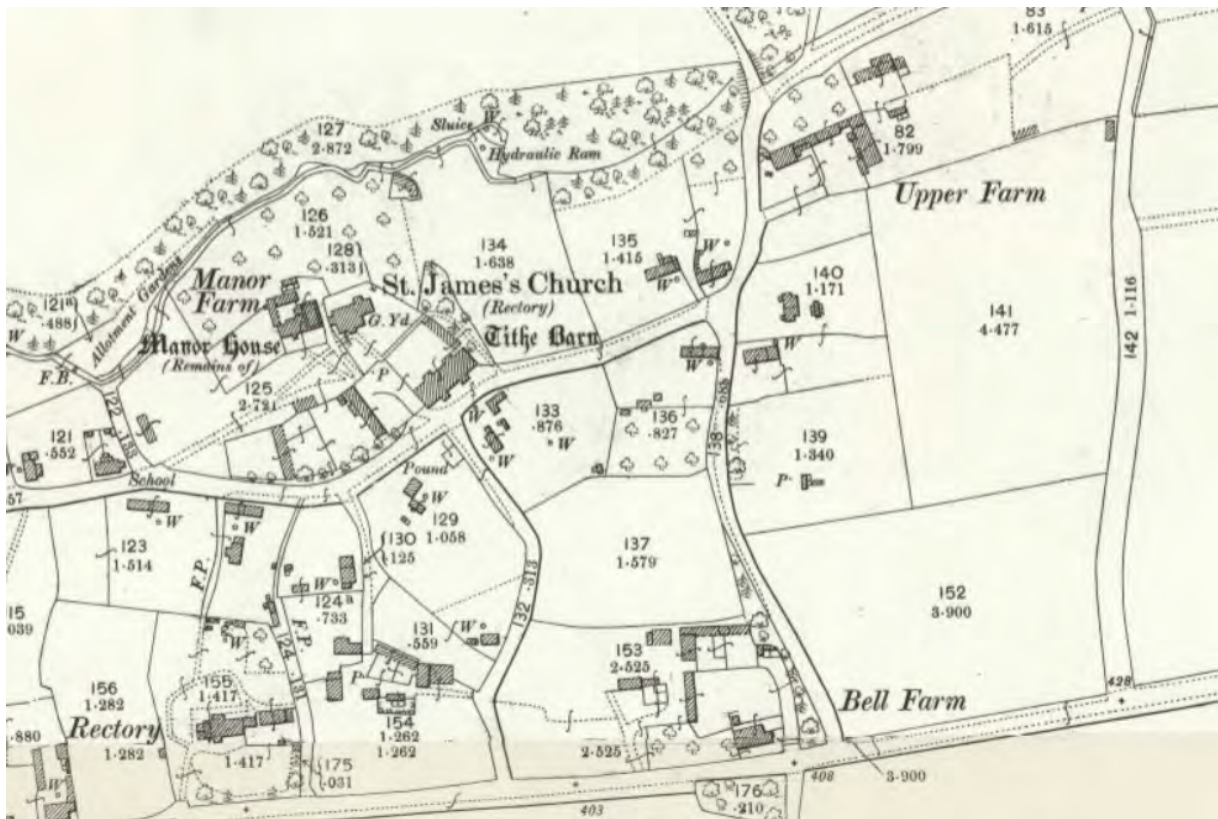


Fig 7, The 1901 2nd edition OS map shows the road on its new alignment. The trees marking the former hedgerow divisions within the development site have now also been removed.

### The development site:

The proposed site for the new village hall is on a currently open field on the outskirts of the village, adjacent to Main Road and on the east side of Park Lane. The site is directly opposite Bell Farmhouse but concealed from it by mature trees and hedgerow planting and the later infill dwellings on the west side of Park Lane. The site rises gently to the north and beyond its northern boundary are the extensive grounds of the grade II listed Deep Thatch (now known as Tudor Cottage) although the house is largely screened by mature planting. To the east and south are open fields of arable and pasture defined by mature hedgerows although much of the southern boundary of the site fronting the Main Road, is defined by a post and wire fence where the hedgerow has been removed or has died out.

### Cherhill Conservation Area:

Cherhill Conservation Area was first designated in 1993, and originally only covered the east part of the village. The Conservation Area boundaries were revised in 1998 to include the whole of the built area (with the exception of some modern peripheral buildings), with the historic sites of Upper Farm, Bell Farm, Lower Farm and Hunts Farm at each corner. The Conservation Area boundary is tightly drawn around the curtilages of the buildings although it includes the woodland belt to the north of the village and the roadside verge on the south side of Main Road, (A4), but excludes all the adjacent areas of farmland.



The site of the proposed new village hall was previously included within the Conservation Area but was specifically excluded when the boundaries were reappraised in 1998. It was considered at the time that as this field lay outside the settlement framework, it did not require the additional protection. The current boundary follows the hedgerow running along Park Lane which was included to protect the character of the lane.

**More detailed description of the site and its setting within the Conservation Area:**

The site is broadly rectangular area comprising the southern part of a field of pasture bordering the A4 that forms part of a larger L-shaped field of pasture, which was historically part of Bell Farm, but is now part of Upper Farm. The site slopes from north to south, and its southern boundary is slightly lower than the adjacent A4 and is defined by wire mesh stock fencing, beyond which is a ditch and hedgerow alongside the road side footpath.



Fig 8, The site seen from the south from the footpath along the A4. A hedgerow will be reinstated along the post and wire fence boundary in the foreground. Tudor Cottage is not visible in this view being set behind mature trees and garden planting on the higher ground in the distance. Park Lane is behind the hedge on the left.

The western boundary with Park Lane is defined by a mature hedgerow with some small trees and a mature hedgerow; and with shrubs and trees behind enclosing the large garden of Tudor Cottage to the north. The east boundary of the site, which is currently undefined, will be a continuation of the existing east boundary to Tudor Cottage. The current east boundary of the field is enclosed by a hedgerow, and this runs alongside a metalled farm track (which is also a public byway) leading northwards through fields to Upper Farm and beyond.



Views from within the site:

The site has wide uninterrupted views southwards across the A4 towards the scarp slope of the Cherhill Down . The Cherhill White Horse and the Lansdown Monument are prominent within this view although the fort and other scheduled monuments are not immediately visible, being set slightly behind the scarp slope. There are also more restricted open views across rising ground to the east, although these are restricted by the hedgerow field boundaries at lower level. Views towards the village and Conservation Area are much more restricted.

The hedgerow and mature planting within the grounds of Tudor Cottage restrict views northwards, although there are distant glimpses of the thatched and dormered roof of the cottage (which lies at the northern end of its extensive garden) through breaks in the hedgerow. Views westwards across Park Lane are largely screened at lower level by the hedgerow along Park Lane so that views of the development along the west side of Park Lane is limited to glimpses of roofs, although part of the side elevation and rear range of Bell Farmhouse, can be seen. The planting within the garden of Tudor Cottage provides additional screening for the more modern development further north along Park Lane.



Fig 9. Tudor Cottage can be glimpsed through the garden planting from the western edge of the site adjacent to Park Lane. Set at a higher level the house will retain uninterrupted views of Cherhill Down.



Views from the Conservation Area towards the site:

Looking into the site there are very limited views into the site from within the Conservation Area, primarily from along its Park Lane boundary, no views from the Grade II listed Upper Farmhouse, to the north of the site or from Chalkstones the listed building on the west side of Park Lane at its junction with The Street. Tudor Cottage (listed as Deep Thatch) is likely to have very restricted views across the western side of the site from the upper floor although not at lower level.



Fig 10. View southwards along Park Lane with the two closest listed buildings of Tudor Cottage on the left and Crossways on the right.



Fig 11. View into the site from Park Lane showing the screening effect of the current hedgerow planting. The roof of the proposed hall may just be visible over the hedge line behind the telegraph pole.



Views towards the site from outside the Conservation Area:

Looking towards the site from the footpath to the east, the site “reads” as open countryside, set against a backdrop of hedgerows and trees on either side of Park lane, with only glimpses of houses through the foliage. In more distant views further along the A4 and from the east end of the Cherhill Down, only the higher northern end of the site is visible whilst the lower southern part of the site is screened by the hedgerows and trees.

The rectangular form of the village is particularly evident from higher ground, and in views from the public rights of way across the Cherhill Downs, the straight lines of landscaping – particularly the hedgerows, and the line of trees along the north bank of the stream, are reinforced by the more linear development along Main Road/ and straight line of the A4.

From the south and eastern edges of the Cherhill Down escarpment from the footpath leading through the plantation of trees upwards from the A4 towards the White Horse, the “L” shaped field of pasture containing the site is clearly seen between the bridleway that follows the farm track to Upper Farm and Park Lane to the west. The higher ground to the north and eastern sides of the site are clearly, but distantly, visible whilst the south western corner is screened by trees along the A4. In these distant views from the south and east, the site is also seen in relation to the church whose tower is visible further to the west. The church is seen in the context of the enclosing hedgerows and mature trees that are a defining element of the Conservation Area. The development, which is out of direct sight of the church, will have a neutral effect upon both its setting and significance.



Fig 12 The site from the western edge of Cherhill Down, with Bell Farm clearly visible facing the A4 and to the left is the church of St James screened from the site by the intervening houses, hedgerows and mature trees.

The site is barely visible in views at the western end of this escarpment and can only be glimpsed from the footpath running northwards to the village from the west side of the Lansdowne Monument because of the undulating landform and screening trees and hedgerows at the lower level. The hedgerow and landscaping within the garden of Bell Farmhouse also provides visual separation from the site to the west of Park Lane.



Fig 13 The site seen from the footpath from Cherhill Down. To the left is Bell Farmhouse with the trees within its gardens screening the site which is just visible behind.

### **Brief History of the Site.**

On the 1843 Tithe map of Cherhill, the Bell Inn (identified as 239 on the Award) was separated by strip fields from the rest of the village. On the east side of Park Lane within the proposed development site was a detached stable range owned by the Bell Inn. Also within the site was another building, a small house with an associated plot of farmland to the rear.

Another dwelling (257) is shown within the south garden of Tudor Cottage (260). All these properties on this side of the lane have small plots of farmland (variously identified as pasture or arable) to the rear of their gardens.





Fig 14 Detail of the 1843 tithe map showing Crossways (233) and Tudor Cottage (260) to the north and a series of narrow plots set at right -angles to the road with two houses, (257 within the current garden of Tudor Cottage) and 253 within the current development site, as well as a row of stables (251) belonging to the Bell Inn (39) fronting onto Park Lane before the lane was diverted to the east.

The Victoria County History records that the Bell Inn was converted to a farmhouse in 1870, and a new farmyard constructed to the rear of the former Inn which seems to have involved incorporating the south end of Park Lane into the farmyard and diverting the Lane further east which necessitated demolishing the cottage (plot No 253) as well as the stable range (plot 251) belonging to the former inn. The house (plot no 257) was also demolished at this time.

The land on the opposite side of Park Lane, and to each side of the farm track leading to Upper Farm, became part of Bell Farm. By 1886, the date of the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map, the buildings on the east side of Park Lane had been demolished, although some trees are shown still in place, and these which mark the alignment of the historic boundaries. Bell Farm was sold in 1930, and its holding split up, although the development site land remained in the ownership of the farm when it was next sold in 1960.

#### **Significance of the affected heritage assets:**

Despite the amount of 20th century development in Cherhill, the historic settlement pattern, with its well defined pattern of narrow enclosed lanes and glimpsed views of houses through enclosing hedge boundaries is still clearly evident and makes a valuable contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. This is particularly apparent within the historic core of the village, round the church, where predominantly small-scale traditionally detailed buildings, constructed in chalk with thatched roofs

are seen within their large plots and they provide valuable evidence of the earlier vernacular tradition and make a particularly valuable contribution to the special character and significance of the Conservation Area and to the settings of its listed buildings.

Closer to the proposed development site at the eastern end of the village are the grade II listed Tudor Cottage and Chalkstones at the northern end of Park Lane. They are good examples of the local vernacular dwellings with medium significance, and they make a positive contribution to the significance of this part of the Conservation Area. However with the exception of a glimpsed view through the garden planting of Tudor Cottage neither building can be seen in relation to the proposed development site and the site makes a neutral contribution to their settings and significance.

Where the Conservation Area boundary runs southwards along Park Lane, the currently open character of the development site allows long distant views over the hedgerow boundary towards the Cherhill Down and monuments on its summit. These views make an important contribution to the setting and significance of this part of the Conservation Area.

The symmetrically-designed Bell Farmhouse (mid-18th century), with sash windows, ashlar porch, clay tiled mansard roof, and brickwork and rendered elevations exemplifies the more formally-designed later 18th and 19th century buildings within this part of the Conservation Area. As a non-designated heritage asset, this building is considered to have low-medium significance, although it occupies a particularly prominent corner position on the eastern edge of the village and its front elevation makes a particularly valuable contribution to the significance of this part of the Conservation Area.

The open nature of the chalkland means that there are long distant views across open countryside towards the village from the east and north, the village appears as a compact settlement dominated by mature trees and hedgerows through which glimpses of buildings are visible. The currently open nature of the L-shaped field containing the proposed development site to the east of Park Lane makes a significant contribution the character of the Conservation Area in these long distance views.

The contribution made by the site to the significance of the designated heritage assets on Cherhill Down, comes from its openness within the landscape that allows the village beyond to be clearly seen within the landscape and when seen looking north allows views from Park Lane across to the escarpment. Currently, because of its small scale within the wider landscape the development site makes a very minor contribution to the setting and significance of these heritage assets and the character of the North Wessex AONB.



### **The proposed development and its effect on the significance of the affected heritage assets:**

It is proposed to erect a new village hall on the south east corner of the site. The single storey building will be set at right-angles to the road where the ground is lowest, and in order to minimise its visual impact it will be cut into the rising ground to the east and north. It will be contemporary in design, with the elevations clad in horizontal boarding incorporating full height glazed openings beneath a wide eave and a curved green roof. There will be louvred windows to the ancillary rooms (W.C.'s etc.).

Reading as a long low building within the landscape it will appear in distant views of similar scale to a farm building, although its green roof and careful detailing will mean that it will blend into the surrounding landscape. Views into the site from footpaths along the A4 and the bridle bath to the east will be screened by the new hedgerow and tree planting and once these hedges and trees have matured the building will only really be seen in the distance in views down from the higher ground of Cherhill Down.

The scheme will also provide parking for 49 vehicles, including 4 disabled spaces; and in order to minimise the visual impact, the associated access driveway and parking areas will be surfaced with a reinforced permeable membrane, through which the grass will be allowed to grow. Outside the site in order to improve vehicular access along Park Lane, the width of the lane between the existing field gate which forms the new site entrance and the junction with the A4 will be widened from 4.5m to 5.5m, and a pavement provided. The entrance into the site will be widened, and defined by a pair of traditionally-detailed timber gates set within the opening.

The missing sections of hedgerow boundary along the A4 to the south will be replanted and the existing hedgerow strengthened with additional planting. In addition the current hedgerow boundary along Park Lane from the A4 junction as far as the site access will be replanted to accommodate the widening of the lane and the remaining hedgerow will be strengthened with additional planting. A new hedgerow will define the eastern boundary which crosses the currently open field, and within the site there will be additional landscaping with planting with indigenous hedgerow and specimen trees.

#### Impacts:

Until the end of the 19th century there were buildings on this site, and the field was subdivided with additional hedgerow boundaries, so that it would have shared the enclosed character of the village rather than being an area of open pasture. The new village hall is a high quality modern building that does not seek to mimic the traditional buildings of the area. Instead it tries to introduce a sensitive and carefully considered structure into the currently open landscape in a way which respects its visually and historically sensitive context.

The careful siting and choice of materials and built form mean that when seen from within and across the site it will reference the colour and curved form of the Downs, and by setting the building down into the ground on the southeast corner of the site, it will maintain views from Cherhill Down to the village. Its position on the site also means that, when looking from Park Lane towards Cherhill Down, it will not obscure views towards the White Horse and Lansdowne Monument.

The introduction of parking for 49 vehicles has the potential to cause harm to the character and appearance of the site. However, provided the car parking is sensitively landscaped with additional planting, and is constructed using a surfacing material which retains its grassed appearance, the adverse effect will be minimal; and it will only be immediately obvious during the periods when the hall is in use. Particular care has been given to the introduction of lighting for the car park and to minimise light spillage from the hall when in use.

As a consequence it is considered that the new building and associated parking will have only a very minor impact on the setting and significance of Tudor Cottage and a minor impact upon the openness of the setting of this part of the Conservation Area. It will also have a minor impact upon the setting of the non-designated Bell Farmhouse, in views from the south and east. These impacts will be largely addressed when the hedgerow planting matures.

The introduction of higher hedgerows along the boundaries may slightly restrict the view southwards from Park Lane towards the Downs, although to an extent this will be balanced by the more open views of Cherhill Down afforded by widening the lower section of the lane.

The widened access into the site will include a visibility splay and this splayed opening will diminish the sense of enclosure along the lane, which will cause some harm to the character of this part of the Conservation Area and significance. It will also open up views into the site, in the foreground of which will be views of the car parking, which will change the character of this part of the setting of the Conservation Area and will cause some harm to its significance. However, as described above, provided that the car park is sensitively landscaped the adverse visual impact is likely to be minimal when the hall is not in use and only minor when the hall is in use.

Additional minor harm to the character of the lane will arise from the increased traffic use although it is anticipated that most of the additional vehicular activity (and therefore any adverse impact) will be on the slightly widened southern section of the lane. The widening will change the character of the south end of Park Lane, and this will result in minor harm to the setting of this part of the Conservation Area. However in order to minimise the adverse impact, the widening has been kept to the minimum, and will be softened by the planting, and also by the detailing to the pavement edge. Moreover, this harm will be balanced by the public benefit arising from the provision of the new community facility.



The new hall and car park will be visible in the higher level, more distant, views from Cherhill Down. Once the landscaping has matured the site will “read” as an integral part of the village, rather than within the surrounding farmland; moreover the green roof to the hall means that it will not be overly-prominent, and the only potentially discordant element will be parked cars when the hall is in use.

**Conclusion:**

The proposed development will cause minor harm to the setting and significance of this part of Cherhill Conservation Area and the setting of the non-designated Bell Farmhouse, arising from the works to satisfy highway and parking requirements. However when the planting is established, it is considered that the development will have only a minor adverse impact on the setting and significance of this part of the Conservation Area, and a neutral effect upon the character of the AONB, the settings of the designated heritage assets on Cherhill Down and upon the setting of the non-designated Bell Farmhouse

The scheme has been carefully designed to minimise adverse impacts. The slight harm to significance that has been identified arising from the development will be less-than-substantial; and it more than offset by the public benefit arising from the provision of the village hall as a high quality community asset.

JME Conservation Ltd.

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