

Justification and Heritage Statement-In connection with new car park

Summary

The proposed carpark lies next to the Parish Church of St Mary (listed Grade I) and Bee Shelter (listed Grade II*), which with the Old Chapel Hall (listed Grade II) and other buildings form a group of significant heritage value as a part of the local historic environment, in a landscape characterised by pasture and orchards. Hartpury has been closely associated with orchards for centuries, indeed it took its name from the perry pear (Saxon *Hardepirige*).

The church is lovingly maintained by a small and increasingly elderly congregation. Changing patterns of worship are resulting in regular weekly attendance at services falling, with the congregation moving towards attendance at festivals and commemorations such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest, weddings, funerals and similar occasions. A natural result being that parking needs are increasing for these larger (but fewer) services and events and the limited existing parking area is unable to cope with the demand.

Repairs of these buildings is the responsibility of the congregation. To raise funds for this purpose fundraising events are required and these in turn also depend on the availability of parking.

The applicant, Hartpury Heritage Trust has, since its formation in 1998, had a record of supporting the heritage, both built and natural. It rescued the former Dominican Chapel and converted it into a Community Hall, it moved and restored the Bee Shelter, it establishes the National Perry Pear Collection at the Orchard Centre, and it has created the nature reserve in Blackwell's End. It has always supported the church congregation maintain the church, providing annual grants towards fabric and churchyard. Being aware of the parking issues, when the paddock that had been used for generations for church overflow parking came on the market, it purchased it, so it could continue to be used for this purpose.

Accepting that the first design, using natural gravel for the trackway rather than plastic reinforcement, was visually inappropriate, the applicant sought specialist advice to enable it to submit a design that not merely seeks to conceal the parked vehicles, but which also

- respects the sensitive location
- meets the present and future needs of the community

and uses the opportunity to enhance the heritage and biodiversity 'offer' of the site, meeting the wider objectives of

- integrating the built heritage with a biocultural conservation approach to both cultural and biological diversity
- responding to the objectives of the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity

The Site

This lies alongside a small settlement clustered around the Parish Church of St Mary (Grade I, NHLE:1078669) with the Eldridge Monument (Grade II NHLE: 1078670), the Sloper Monument (Grade II* NHLE: 1172175) and the Bee Shelter (Grade II* NHLE: 1341870) within the churchyard; Hartpury Court (Grade II NHLE: 1172186) and The Old Chapel Hall (Grade II NHLE: 1078671) on the east side of Murrells End Road; and Hartpury Tithe Barn (Grade II* NHLE: 1172209) on the west side, with Hartpury Mill (Grade II NHLE:1078661) a short distance to the north-west. Together they form a group of significant heritage value as a part of the local historic environment, which lies in an agricultural landscape characterised by pasture and orchards subdivided by hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Hartpury has been closely associated with orchards for centuries, indeed it took its name from the perry pear (Saxon *Hardepirige*).

The Church of St Mary has a particular heritage significance, reflected by its designation as a Grade I listed building. The Church is also an active place of worship and ceremony, as it has been for nearly a thousand years. The Old Chapel Hall (owned by the applicant) is a Grade 2 listed building that was built as a Dominican Chapel in 1829. It has had a variety of uses since that time, but in 2001 was restored by the applicant from a derelict farm store on the "at risk" register to become an attractive community hall.

The present parking provision is deemed unsightly and fails to respect the paddock's sensitive location. Having been informed that planning permission would be required to rectify this, the applicant instructed landscape architects Illman Young to design a scheme appropriate to this sensitivity. Their design, which accompanies this application, uses grass grids. The load bearing grids will be laid on a 'root friendly' sub-base and will be seeded, which will replace the current stoned track. The detailed landscaping not merely conceals the parked vehicles but meets the applicant's wider objectives as set out below.

The Need

Hartpury Church has served the village community for nearly a thousand years, adapting throughout that time to meet current worshipping needs. It continues to fulfil that role today, but in addition there is an additional need, that of the visitor, the growing number who visit to appreciate the grade 1 church and churchyard for their historical, architectural

and artistic merit. Churches are becoming part of the visitor experience, destinations to visit, places to discover. They are resting places for walkers and cyclists. Places for all, without discrimination, to shelter, pause and in the peaceful atmosphere, reflect – a kind of spiritual service station on the journey through life!

But churches as well as being attractive, are also expensive to maintain. At Hartpury, as in so many rural churches, responsibility for the care of the church and its monuments falls upon a small community, currently with the need to reroof the church nave, overhaul the historic ring of bells and conserve the stained glass. The small congregation cannot afford this themselves but must seek help from others. Today this increasingly means on visitors. They require an interesting story and information about what they are seeing. This interest will hopefully convert into donations, providing the revenue needed to support the costs of repairs. These contributions are a significant help with the continuing challenge of good maintenance. The applicant (Hartpury Heritage Trust) has for the past 20 years assisted the church community in responding to this, by researching this heritage and explaining it to the visitor by website and leaflet. It is this growing following of visitors that are helping keep the church from becoming a large monument challenging to maintain, instead of being a living building able to face the future with confidence.

Over the years, demand for parking for both Church and its adjacent Community Hall has steadily increased. The buildings are about two miles from the main village, so beyond today's normal walking distance. Worshipping patterns are also changing. Regular weekly attendance at services is falling as the congregation increasingly moves to attendance at just the major church festival services. This concentration of attendances at fewer services has benefits in that the church is wastefully heated for small numbers less frequently but does mean that the small existing church carpark is often inadequate to accommodate the vehicles of those attending. Thanks to the kindness of the previous owner of the paddock next to the church, in dry weather it has been increasingly used over recent years for overflow parking, but when it is too wet to use, vehicles have had to be parked on the road verge along the short stretch of Church Road and for some distance along Park Road. This is becoming more and more a safety risk as traffic increases., with the potential for a serious accident. This danger is aggravated when Park Road is used as a diversionary route when the A417 is flooded – seemingly an increasing occurrence. Winter mid-week funerals and Christmas concerts take place at this time of year. To ensure the paddock's continuing availability for parking and to help alleviate this danger, when the paddock was recently offered for sale, the Church and the applicant combined to raise the £30,000 needed to purchase it, and to carry out the work needed to enable it to be used for parking in all weather conditions.

The Application

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The present application is designed to meet the current parking needs of those attending church services, visiting the Church or using Community Hall, thereby avoiding the necessity of parking on the road verges. There is at present no demand for a charging point for electric vehicles, so this is not included, but should the need become apparent, there is an existing electricity supply available, so provision can easily be made. The Church is also on a cycle trail – the Newent loop, and close to the National trail, so attention has been given to provision for cyclists. A cycle rack is included in the proposal, that is easily visible from the road, so noticeable by those cyclists who come by chance.

Smaller congregations can continue to use the existing small carpark to the west of the church, so that the new carpark is unlikely to be used for parking very frequently – although it will be needed on more than 28 occasions in the year, therefore planning permission is required. At other times the field will be used as a traditional paddock and orchard, with only a narrow rolled-stone path for the use of pedestrians and wheelchairs. Cars when parked there will be almost totally concealed by the proposed hedge and orchard planted in the paddock.

Conservation of the local heritage

The challenge of integrating the conservation of the built heritage with the natural heritage, and a biocultural approach to the conservation of the local cultural and biological diversity has always interested the applicant - indeed its former name Hartpury Historic Land and Buildings Trust reflected this. It tries to avoid a "tunnel visionary" approach which focusses on just one aspect of our heritage, favouring an approach that adds value to each element – and provides visitors with a complete picture of the changing pattern of the local community from which our present heritage evolved.

The church and the buildings that surround it result from the changing needs of a pastoral community over the years. They possess a group value which contribute to their overall interest. This reveals much about the community the Church was built to serve and helps give an understanding of the significance of a rural parish church as part of a Medieval manorial settlement. The applicant seeks to reflect this in the information it provides for visitors.

The applicant is very aware of the significance of the group of buildings that surround the Church (its past conservation projects have moved two of them off the "at risk" register). The group is one of the reasons why the Church is a popular visitor destination. Local heritage however is not confined to the built heritage, important as that is, but includes the

entire biocultural heritage and the pastoral community in which it developed. A focus on this biocultural heritage, and the rate of biodiversity loss and species extinction, is part of the applicant's vision of heritage conservation. The applicant (holder of the National Perry Pear collection) believes that those caring for heritage should be concerned about every part of that heritage of whatever type, and how it can best support and increase awareness of the whole by working together for the common good. It will also encourage a new audience of visitors, increase awareness of the region's local fruit heritage, provide income for the Church, raise the profile of Hartpury Orchard Centre (the home of the National Collection) and support local employment. The management of the fruit trees, and the harvesting and processing of the fruit will be carried out for the applicant by Orchards Guardians CIC - a community interest company, formed jointly by Gloucestershire Orchard Trust and the applicant, based at Hartpury Orchard Centre. The applicant will sell the products to raise funds to support the heritage of the parish.

The Orchards

The village name Hartpury is derived from *Hardepirige*, the Saxon for hard pear, and perry pears including the Hartpury Green, are described in the appendix to John Evelyn's *Silva* of 1660, as being found in the villages around May Hill. Perry pears are the indigenous fruit of the Forest of Dean and its neighbours.

The cherry is another fruit that has a particular relevance to Hartpury. On 10th February 1619, a dispute was heard in the Bishop's Court between the vicar of Hartpury, Thomas Rudgeway, and Richard Nelme concerning the latter's refusal to pay tithe on 300 bushels of apples, 200 bushels of pears and £4 worth of cherries. This considerable quantity of cherries would have come from the varieties grown at that time now known as Mazzards. Today these are rarely found outside Devon. This local relevance is reflected in the planting of the hedge that will conceal the carpark. A perry pear, the Hartpury Red has been planted at the end, along with six fruiting cherries in the hedge – the actual variety the applicant has chosen to plant is the Burcombe mazzard. These, with other local fruit varieties, including the Hartpury Green perry pear, known since at least the 1650s, are described in a visitors' *Orchard Trail* leaflet available in the church, along with the other fruit trees in the churchyard.

The Bee Shelter

This is a particularly good example of the way the applicant demonstrates the connection between our built heritage, the cultural heritage and the natural environment. The cartulary of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester (c1266) lists honey-rents from the manor of Hartpury, where the fields were known as Honeylands, a name still used today. Whilst the fields are not open to the public, their historical relevance is explained in the Bee Shelter booklet published by the applicant. This includes a copy of a painting showing two skeps in the garden of Hartpury Court at the time it was occupied by the Dominican nuns for whom the adjacent Chapel was built.

The part of the paddock now being planted as an orchard, appropriately called (since at least 1839) Churchyard Garden, will contain examples of the local fruit varieties, providing an in-situ conservation collection of local varieties. It will be used as an example of management required to encourage solitary bees and other pollinating insects, with its USP being the proximity of the Bee Shelter and Hartpury's beekeeping heritage.

The U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity

The convention defined biodiversity as the variability among living organisms from all sources, divided into three elements: diversity within species, diversity between species, and diversity of ecosystems. Agricultural biodiversity was recognised and defined as *"... all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture, and all components of biological diversity that constitute the agro-ecosystem, the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms, at genetic, species and ecosystem levels, which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes"*. Under the UN's relevant Sustainability Development Goals signatories were expected to *"... maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals"*.

The UK is relatively rich in wild relatives of crops, landraces of cereal, vegetable and fruit crops, and traditional orchard trees. The conservation of orchard fruit varieties depends upon the maintenance of living collections, because they do not generally breed true from their seeds, pips or stones.

In 2020, when assessing the effectiveness of the implementation measures taken in achieving the desired outcomes for the sixth National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee recognised that although Defra funds a number of plant genebanks, including the national fruit collection at Brogdale in Kent, and whilst there had been significant progress in ex-situ seed conservation, progress towards meeting the overall target at national level was at an insufficient rate.

The applicant's nearby National Perry Pear living collection is an example of sustainable **in-situ** conservation, which is the conservation and **use of species in the locality** in which they originated. The juice from the pears is processed on-site in Hartpury. The orchard being planted in the Church paddock will be another in-situ collection in the area in which the varieties were first found.

Fruit varieties

The numerous feral seedlings growing in the Severn Vale were remarked upon by the monk William of Malmesbury Abbey, when in 1100 he wrote of the Severn Vale that *here you may see the high wayes and common lanes clad with apple trees and peare trees, not set nor grafted by the industry of man's hand but growing naturally of their own accord*. In addition to perry pears and cherries, the intention is to include other local fruits including:

Plums: The wild plum, sloe and the myrobalan are often found in hedges, but plums were not initially an important crop locally and rarely found outside walled gardens until the 19th century. A cut in the tax on sugar and growth in sugar production in the colonies, resulted in the Britain of the 1850s having probably the cheapest sugar in the world. This encouraged the production of jam - no longer a luxury for the rich, but available to all. More plum and damson orchards were needed to meet the demand. Feral plums were found to be most suitable, having the vigour, hardiness and relative disease resistance often associated with indigenous stock. The ubiquitous Yellow Egg plum, found in most cottage orchards was ideal and a form of this, known as the Pershore, came to dominate the market alongside the Blaisdon Red, another wilding found growing in the village of Blaisdon, and the Dymock Red. Interestingly this locality would appear to be the line where the south-western purple-red feral plums (the Blaisdon, Dymock, and Winterbourne Magnum) meet the yellow egg type (the Pershore, Warwickshire Drooper, and Jimmy Moore) found in the Midland counties.

Apples: As well as pears for perry, many local apple varieties were grown for cider. Some of these are already planted in the churchyard near the Bee Shelter – the Corse Hill, from the neighbouring village of that name, and the Overton Red, from a hamlet lying between Hartpury and Maisemore, now only recalled in the farm name. Also planted are Lake's Kernel, a fine dessert apple bred by Hartpury blacksmith Bill Lake, and Ashmead's Kernel, which was bred in Clarence Street, Gloucester by Dr. Ashmead in 1700, and today is acknowledged to be one of the tastiest apples available.