

NARNIA, 8 LEWIS CLOSE, RISINGHURST,
OXFORDSHIRE

HERITAGE STATEMENT



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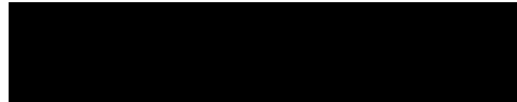
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PROJECT: Narnia, 8 Lewis Close, Risinghurst, Oxfordshire

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NARNIA, 8 LEWIS CLOSE, RISINGHURST - HERITAGE STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by JP Heritage on behalf of Mr and Mrs Gibbon to inform proposals for a replacement dwelling at 8 Lewis Close, Risinghurst. 8 Lewis Close lies adjacent to The Kilns which has historic associations with the 20th century author C.S. Lewis.

1.1.2 This document an outline description of the historic development and significance of the identified heritage assets and an assessment of heritage impacts of the proposed scheme for a replacement dwelling at 8 Lewis Close. This has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the LPA in accordance with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Revised 2023).

1.2 Nature of the proposals

1.2.1 The proposed scheme is for a replacement dwelling and landscaping at Narnia, 8 Lewis Close.

1.3 Heritage designations

1.3.1 8 Lewis Close is an unlisted building which is not located within a conservation area or within the setting of a listed building. The Kilns lies adjacent to 8 Lewis Close. The Kilns is not listed and is not included on the Oxford Heritage Asset Register or the Oxford Historic Environment Record. However, due to the historic associations with the author C.S. Lewis, it is likely that the LPA would consider The Kilns (9 Lewis Close) to be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset.



Figure 1: South elevation of 8 Lewis Close



Figure 2: Oblique view of the south and east aspects of The Kilns

1.4 Planning history

1.5.1 The relevant planning history for Grove House is as follows:

08/01004/LBC – Listed Building Consent for fixing of 380mm diameter blue plaque to C.S. Lewis on wall to right of Tradesmen’s Entrance facing Lewis Close (Approved).

68/00642/M_H – Erection of one detached dwelling house with double garage and access (Approved).

68/00489/M_H – Erection of one detached dwelling house with double garage and access (Approved).

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NPPF (Revised 2023)

2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning applications ‘local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (paragraph 194).

2.1.2 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as being ‘a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.’ Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets.

2.1.3 In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 197):

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.1.4 Specific guidance on the treatment of designated heritage assets (listed buildings) emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 199). It advises that ‘when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 2.1.5 Paragraph 200 continues by stating that ‘any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification’.
- 2.1.6 Specific guidance on the treatment of non-designated heritage assets emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 203). It advises that ‘The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’.
- 2.2 Oxford Local Plan 2036
- 2.2.1 The relevant historic environment policy for the proposed development is as follows:
- Policy DH3 – Designated Heritage Assets
- 2.2.2 Policy DH3 states the following:
- Planning permission or listed building consent will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford’s unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality.
- For all planning decisions for planning permission or listed building consent affecting the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight will be given to the conservation of that asset and to the setting of the asset where it contributes to that significance or appreciation of that significance.
- An application for planning permission for development which would or may affect the significance of any designated heritage asset, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes a description of the asset and its significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the asset’s significance. As part of this process full regard should be given to the detailed character assessments and other relevant information set out any relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan.
- The submitted heritage assessment must include information sufficient to demonstrate:
- a) an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset, including recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social,

cultural, economic and environmental benefits they may bring; and 94
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b) that the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and that harm to its significance has been avoided or minimised; and

c) that, in cases where development would result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the extent of harm has been properly and accurately assessed and understood, that it is justified, and that measures are incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce or compensate for the harm.

Where the setting of an asset is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the asset, as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and its contribution to significance.

Substantial harm to or loss of Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings, Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if:

- i. the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss; or all of the following apply:
- ii. the nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the sites; and
- iii. no viable use of the asset itself can be found in the medium term (through appropriate marketing) that will enable its conservation; and
- iv. conservation by grant funding or similar is not possible; and
- v. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use;
- vi. a plan for recording and advancing understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost, including making this evidence publicly available, is agreed with the City Council.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Clear and extensive justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment.

3.0 UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

3.1 Understanding the history of the heritage asset

- 3.1.1 The 2nd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1898) shows the layout of buildings and claypits associated with a Brick and Tile Works which was located to the south of Kiln Lane. The District Valuation Survey records (1910) show that the Brick and Tile Works covered an area between Kiln Lane and Old Road at Shotover to the south. The site was owned and occupied by a certain H. J. Phillips.

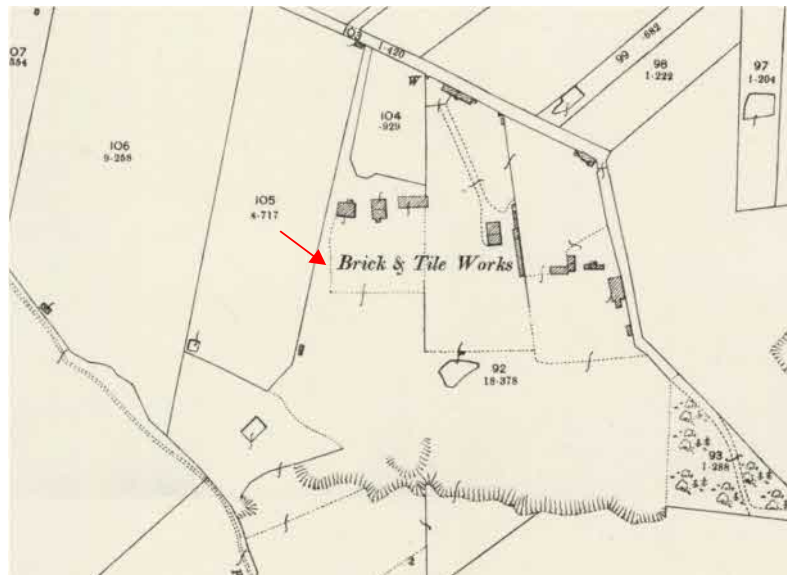


Figure 3: Extract from the 2nd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1899)



Figure 4: Extract from the District Valuation Survey map (1910) showing the extent of the Brick and Tile Works (No. 148 shaded green)

3.1.2 The 3rd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1921) shows some changes to the layout of the Brick and Tile Works, including the construction of an open-sided shed in an area currently occupied by The Kilns.

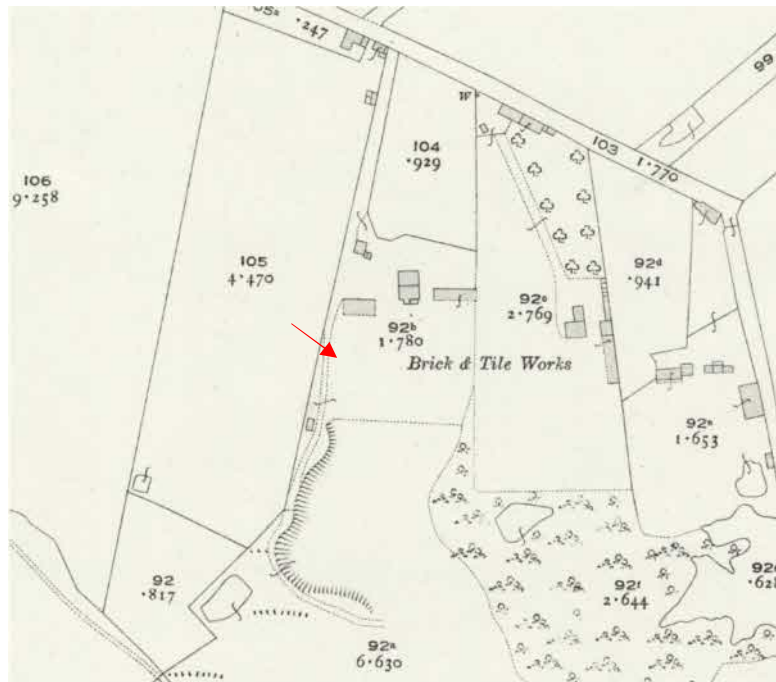


Figure 5: Extract from the 2nd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1899)

- 3.1.3 The Kilns (9 Lewis Close) was built on the site of the closed Brick and Tile Works in 1922. The property included an 8-acre garden with a lake created by a flooded claypit. A certain Joseph Thorne lived at the house in the 1920s. The property was up for sale in 1930 and C.S. Lewis wrote a description of the property following his first visit there before purchasing The Kilns, as follows:

We did not go inside, but the eight acre garden is such stuff as dreams are made of. I never imagined that for us any such garden would ever come within the sphere of discussion. The house ... stands at the entrance to its own grounds at the northern foot of Shotover at the end of a narrow lane, which is turn opens off a very bad and little used road, giving as great privacy as can reasonably be looked for near a large town. To the left of the house are the two brick kilns from which it takes its name – in front, a lawn and hard tennis court – then a large bathing pool, beautifully wooded, and with a circular brick seat overlooking it: after that a steep wilderness broken with ravines and nooks of all kinds runs up to a little cliff topped by a thisty meadow, and then the property ends in a thick belt of fir trees, almost a wood: the view from the cliff over the dim blue distance of the plain is simply glorious.

- 3.1.4 In 1933 a dwelling house and five acres of wooded building land was put up for auction and by 1935 a new housing estate (Risinghurst Estate) was well under construction. The 1939 edition of the Ordnance Survey map shows the layout of the Risinghurst Estate to the north of The Kilns. The southern side of Kiln Lane remained relatively undeveloped at this time. The 1939 map shows a lane leading off Kiln Lane leading to The Kilns. An orchard and two kilns are shown to the north of the house and a lawn with a central path and lake and woodland to the south. The lawn is now occupied by 8 Lewis Close.



Figure 6: Extract from the 1939 edition of the Ordnance Survey map

- 3.1.5 The wild grounds to the south of The Kilns (now the C.S. Lewis Nature Reserve managed by BBOWT) provided the inspiration for the Chronicles of Narnia. These stories started off as a tale told to children who had been evacuated to The Kilns from London in 1939. The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe was published none tears later in 1948.
- 3.1.6 In 1955 C.S. Lewis wrote a letter which included a description of the grounds of The Kilns at this time, as follows:
- The Quarry has not been worked for forty years or more, and nothing now remains of it except some deep pits with rugged stone walls; the brick kilns too have been long abandoned, although two of them are still standing in this garden, and we use them for storing fuel and suchlike.
- 3.1.7 An aerial photograph of the Risinghurst Estate shows The Kilns with a lawn and woodland to the south and the encroachment of the new estate to the west of the property.



Figure 7: Extract from an aerial photograph of the Risinghurst Estate in 1953 (red arrow shows the approximate location of 8 Lewis Close)

- 3.1.8 C.S. Lewis died in 1963 and in 1968 Lewis Close cul-de-sac was built on land attached to The Kilns, including 8 Lewis Close. The woodland to the south of The Kilns was given to the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust (now BBOWT). The California-based C.S. Lewis Foundation purchased The Kilns in the 1980s and restored it to its original 1930s appearance. An application for listed status was submitted but rejected in February 2002.
- 3.2 Understanding the form of the heritage asset
- 3.2.1 Narnia, 8 Lewis Close is located at the southern end of Lewis Close and adjacent to The Kilns, the former home of C.S. Lewis. Detached houses are positioned along the eastern side of Lewis Close which curves gently south-eastwards terminating with Nos. 7 and 8 Lewis Close. The position of the houses is irregular, with each house set back further eastwards as you progress southwards along Lewis Close. Lawns and planting in front gardens contribute to a verdant character along Lewis Close with the vegetation filtering views towards the houses. The former drive leading to The Kilns from Kiln Lane is planted with trees provides screening to the rear gardens along Netherwoods Road to the west. This feature reinforces the verdant character of Lewis Close. The late 1960s houses, including 8 Lewis Close are 2-storeys with buff colour bricks and shallow pitched roofs finished with tiles. Window openings generally have a horizontal emphasis.



Figure 8: 8 Lewis Close viewed from the road



Figure 9: Late 1960s detached houses along the eastern side of Lewis Close



Figure 10: Verdant street character of Lewis Close (view looking south along Lewis Close)

- 3.2.2 The Kilns is a single storey dwelling with attic accommodation located within a relatively modest sized garden. The house is of brick construction in Flemish bond with gabled roofs finished with double Roman tiles. The south elevation includes a front door flanked by projecting gables with flush sided bay windows. These elements include sections of roughcast render. There are two dormer windows on the eastern side of the front elevation. Window openings have horizontal emphasis and include multi-paned casement windows and

chamfered lintels. This elevation faces away from the road and is partly masked by a high hedge boundary. As such, this aspect of the house is less legible in the street scene. Originally, this elevation looked across the south lawn of The Kilns, now occupied by 8 Lewis Close. The current boundary between The Kilns and 8 Lewis Close includes a low close board fence with shrub planting. Seasonally, there are varying degrees of permeability in views between the two properties.



Figure 11: Oblique view of the south elevation of The Kilns



Figure 12: Boundary between The Kilns and 8 Lewis Close viewed from Narnia

- 3.2.3 The east elevation of The Kilns faces towards the road and includes a door with recessed porch under a semi-circular brick arch and a window opening to the left and an attic door above with metal steps leading to C.S Lewis' bedroom. The eastern boundary of The Kilns includes a high hedge which partially screens views of the house. There is some inter-visibility between the east gable of The Kilns and 8 Lewis Close in views looking south-west from Lewis Close. The single storey rear wing of The Kilns is a later extension. This aspect of The Kilns is screened by the high hedge boundary with only a glimpsed view through the north entrance to the property.



Figure 13: East elevation of The Kilns



Figure 14: Inter-visibility between 8 Lewis Close and The Kilns in the street scene



Figure 15: View looking south along Lewis Close with The Kilns to the right of the photo

3.2.4 Narnia, 8 Lewis Close is located to the south of The Kilns. The house is positioned at the northern end of the garden and is therefore in close proximity to The Kilns. The house and garden occupy the western part of the former south lawn of The Kilns. The house itself is of the same style as the other late 1960s houses in Lewis Close. It is of 2-storeys with buff bricks, a tiled roof and windows with horizontal emphasis. The principal elevation appears to face south and includes a shallow pitched gable on the left hand side. A later flat roof first floor

extension has been added to the left hand side of the south elevation. The rear aspect is characterised by a catslide type roof with a low eaves. There is a modern conservatory on the south elevation and a single storey flat roof wrap around garage extension on the north-west side of the house.



Figure 16: Oblique view of the south and west elevations of 8 Lewis Close



Figure 17: Oblique view of the north and east elevations of 8 Lewis Close

- 3.2.5 8 Lewis Close includes a vehicular access and drive on the north-eastern side of the house. High close board fencing along the footpath to the nature reserve to the south and on the north-east side of the house screens views of the garden of 8 Lewis Close. The rear garden is bounded to the south and west by a close board fence. Houses along Netherwoods Road are conspicuous in views westwards from the garden. The wooded slopes of the nature reserve to the south form a backdrop to the property to the south. The rear garden is mostly lawn and therefore open, which facilitates views southwards.



Figure 18: Western boundary of the garden at 8 Lewis Close with houses along Netherwoods Road beyond



Figure 19: View south towards the nature reserve across the lawn of 8 Lewis Close

3.2.6 The nature reserve to the south, which was formerly part of the grounds of The Kilns and before that a quarry associated with the Brick and Tile Works, includes a lake (described as a bathing pool by Lewis) with footpaths and wooded slopes rising from the southern side of the lake. The nature reserve includes a brick seat and an air raid shelter which are contemporary with C.S Lewis.



Figure 20: View across the lake in the nature reserve to the south of 8 Lewis Close



Figure 21: Brick seat on the north-west side of the lake

- 3.2.7 There are filtered views towards The Kilns from the mound over the air raid shelter on the eastern side of the lake. These views include 8 Lewis Close and there is therefore some level of inter-visibility from this side of the lake. Views of The Kilns are not apparent as you progress westwards along the southern margins of the lake. There are filtered views of 8 Lewis Close from the brick seat on the north-western side of the lake. 8 Lewis Close blocks views of The Kilns from this position. Due to dense tree cover, there are no apparent views towards The Kilns from the rising ground on the southern side of the nature reserve.



Figure 22: Heavily filtered view towards The Kilns from the mound over the air raid shelter in the nature reserve

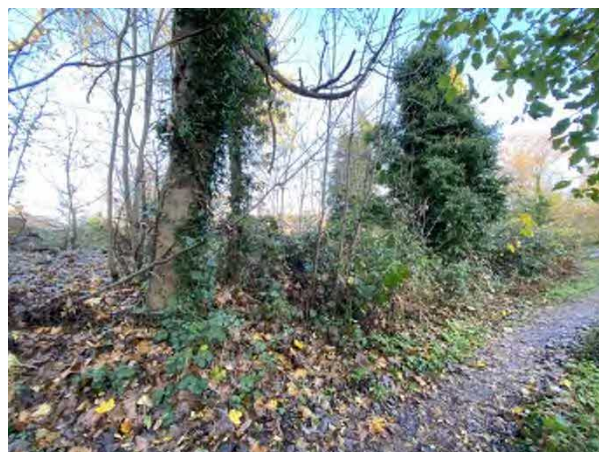


Figure 23: Filtered view of 8 Lewis Close from the brick seat in the nature reserve

- 3.2.8 Due to the rising ground within the nature reserve there is a visual connection between The Kilns and the former grounds of the property in views from Lewis Close.



Figure 24: Visual connection between The Kilns and the nature reserve in views looking south from Lewis Close

3.3 Assessment of the significance of the heritage asset

- 3.3.1 The Kilns is not a listed building (an application for listing was rejected in 2002) and is not located within a conservation area. There are no listed buildings located adjacent or nearby to The Kilns. The Oxford Heritage Asset Register does not include an entry for The Kilns. The Kilns was awarded a Blue Plaque as part of the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme in 2008.
- 3.3.2 Although not formally identified as a heritage asset, The Kilns is assessed in this report to be of some heritage value due to its well documented association with a person of note and the survival of the wider grounds of C.S Lewis' house (the nature reserve) which provided the inspiration for the Chronicles of Narnia. The house itself is of standard design and construction for the early 20th century period and is therefore of limited interest architecturally. However, the historic association with C.S. Lewis, the cultural/aesthetic value of the Chronicles of Narnia books and the communal value of the house and the nature reserve, which forms part of the extended setting of The Kilns, are considered to be of sufficient heritage interest to regard The Kilns as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 3.3.3 8 Lewis Close forms part of the late 1960s development of Lewis Close which was built on the grounds of The Kilns. Nos. 7 and 8 Lewis Close occupy the south lawn (8 Lewis Close) and tennis court (7 Lewis Close) that lay between the house the lake and woodland within the grounds of The Kilns to the south. The lawn of 8 Lewis Close preserves the open character of the grounds when Lewis resided at The Kilns. As such, the garden of 8 Lewis Close preserves the character of the transition between the more formal gardens of The Kilns and the 'wilderness' to the south.
- 3.3.4 The house at 8 Lewis Close is of late 1960s date and is not considered to be of any merit architecturally. Lewis Close itself forms part of a later phase of development associated with the Risinghurst Estate. Lewis Close has a different architectural language to the earlier buildings and does not have any interest in terms of group value.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Proposals

4.1.1 The proposed scheme is for a replacement dwelling and landscaping at 8 Lewis Close.

4.2 Demolition of the existing house

4.2.1 The existing house is of late 1960s date, has been extended at ground floor and at first floor and is not considered to be of any heritage value or merit within the setting of The Kilns. Demolition of the existing house would not therefore adversely impact on the historic environment.

4.3 Replacement dwelling

4.3.1 The proposed replacement dwelling would be positioned over the footprint of the existing house. The overall footprint would be larger but the main part of the additional footprint would be on the western side of the replacement dwelling and would not impact on views towards The Kilns. The main part of the replacement dwelling would be offset slightly further to the south than the current house and would afford a degree more breathing space between it and The Kilns. The proposed garage would occupy the same position as the existing and would not project any further north than is currently the case. The design of the attached garage with a pitched roof rather than a flat roof would be more in keeping with the aesthetic of The Kilns (figures 16 and 17). It is also proposed to relocate waste and recycling storage to the angle between the garage and house on the western side of the replacement house. This would remove the current clutter of bins along the boundary with The Kilns, improving this aspect of the relationship between the two properties (figure 12).

4.3.2 The south side of the proposed dwelling would include sections that break forward marginally into the garden. The cross gable on the right hand side of the south side of the building would only have a relatively shallow projection. The deeper wing on the left hand side would be single storey and flat roofed and, as such, would not have any visual impacts in views from the nature reserve to the south. The proposed large areas of full height glazing would create a visually lightweight element on this side of the replacement house.

4.3.2 The height of the replacement dwelling would be marginally higher than the existing. However, the apex of the ridge would be set back further away from The Kilns than the existing house and there would therefore be negligible impacts arising from the slight change in height. There would be no impacts on an appreciation of The Kilns from the nature reserve or from Lewis Close (figures 14, 22 and 24).

4.3.3 The proposed replacement dwelling would be of 2-storeys which is in keeping with the existing house and the other late 1960s houses along Lewis Close. The overall form would include relatively shallow pitched roofs and cross gables. Window openings and areas of glazing would have a horizontal emphasis that would be in keeping with the character of Lewis Close.

4.3.4 PV arrays are proposed for the south facing slope. These would blend with the proposed natural slate finish for the roof. Proposed rooflights on the north elevation would be minimal and would not appear overly-prominent.

4.3.5 Materials would include a mix of stone (ground floor), vertical timber boarding (second floor) and natural slate for the roof finish. The stone is a similar colour to the buff brick and is consistent with the local vernacular, e.g. older buildings along kiln lane. The use of timber

board cladding is also in keeping with the local vernacular and would blend more successfully in the transition from the built up area to the natural landscape to the south than is currently the case. The proposed natural slate is also in keeping with local historical materials and is appropriate for shallower pitched roofs.

4.4 Landscaping

4.4.1 Additional planting is proposed along the boundaries of 8 Lewis Close. This would enhance the verdant character of The Kilns, the nature reserve and the southern end of Lewis Close.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 This Heritage Statement describes the historic development and significance of the heritage asset and a heritage impact assessment of the proposed development. As such, it is considered that this Heritage Statement meets the requirements set out in paragraph 194 of the NPPF local planning policy and provides sufficient information regarding the heritage assets.

5.1.2 The conclusions of this report are that the land occupied by 8 Lewis Close was part of a Brick and Tile Works in the 19th century and became the south lawn of The Kilns from the 1920s. The author C.S. Lewis resided at The Kilns from 1930 to 1963. The Kilns was positioned in extensive grounds at this time and included the nature reserve to the south. Lewis Close was developed on the land associated with The Kilns in the late 1960s. 8 Lewis Close is located on the south lawn of the original garden of The Kilns. 8 Lewis Close retains a relatively large lawn and therefore preserves the historic association between The Kilns and the nature reserve to the south. The Kilns is considered to be of local heritage interest.

5.1.3 The proposed scheme for a replacement dwelling at 8 Lewis Close is considered to be appropriate to the heritage values identified in this report. The existing house is of no interest and its demolition would not impact on the historic environment. The replacement dwelling would be of a scale, form, position, alignment and use of materials that would be sympathetic to the character and setting of The Kilns and the visual relationship between this building and the nature reserve to the south.

5.1.9 As such, it is considered that the proposed development would not have harmful impacts on the significance and character of the heritage asset in accordance with the relevant NPPF and Oxford Local Plan policies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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[The Kilns, Risinghurst \(theadings.org.uk\)](http://theadings.org.uk)