Chancel Cottage is a grade two listed building in the Steeple Aston Conservation Area. There are several grade 2 listed buildings in the vicinity including Jasmine cottage, Fir Lane Cottage, Fir Cottage and Merlins as well as the grade 2\* listed Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. I am concerned about a number of issues relating to the application.

Internally it is proposed to remove the inglenook fireplace (now a cupboard) in the kitchen. I would not consider this loss to be justified. On the first floor, the bathroom is proposed to be at the front of the house. This is likely to be problematic as obscured glazing would not be acceptable and it would be difficult to provide mechanical ventilation as vents through the front wall or roof plane are unlikely to be acceptable.

Externally, two quite large dormer windows are proposed on the rear roof plane. There are a number of examples of large dormer windows in Steeple Aston but I would not agree that they are ‘traditional’. Mistakes of the second half of the 20th Century should not be repeated. Instead, I believe that additional natural light and ventilation could be provided by appropriate low-profile rooflights.

My primary concern, however, is the proposed extension. The proposed extension would be covered on the southern and western elevations with vertical timber cladding and with stone on the others. The extension would project further south than the gable of the original house and would therefore be visible from the conservation area and from the grade 2\* listed church. This timber-clad extension would be quite conspicuous and alien to the conservation area. I believe that it would be harmful to the special interests of Chancel Cottage, the conservation area and the setting adjacent listed buildings.

Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan (1996) states that:

*Control will be exercised over all new development, including conversions and extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external-finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of the development. In sensitive areas such as conservation areas, the area of outstanding beauty and areas of high landscape value, development will be required to be of a high standard and the use of traditional local building materials will normally be required.*

Policy ESD 16 of The Cherwell Local Plan Submission (January 2014) states that new development should:

*Reflect or in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette.*

This proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of either policy.

The NPPF (134) states that where a proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. I would not consider that there is any evidence of a public benefit from the development that would out-weigh the harm. Similarly, the NPPF (131) states that:

*local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.*

This proposed development would help to erode rather than sustain or enhance the significance of the listed building, the conservation area and other near-by listed buildings.

I believe that there is scope for an extension at this site that would not unduly affect heritage assets but recommend that this application – as it stands – be refused.