

Mr. M. Crofton-Briggs  
Planning Policy Team  
Oxford City Council  
Ramsay House  
10 St Ebbe's Street  
Oxford  
OX1 1PT

24 June 2011

Dear Mr Crofton-Briggs

### **Barton Area Action Plan Preferred Options document**

The Committee of the Friends of Old Headington has no objection to the Council's overall proposals for the land west of Barton, since we are aware not only that there is a serious shortage of housing in Oxford, but also that this site is owned by the Council and has been safeguarded for development. However, there are two sections of the Preferred Options document which are of serious concern to us:

#### The Ruskin Fields addition

**We wish to place on record our objection to the proposal by Ruskin College to build 175-193 houses on fields within the Old Headington conservation area, and to ask that this proposal be excluded from the next stage of the Barton Area Action Plan decision process.**

It is our responsibility as a conservation group to weigh up the impact of any proposed building in or near Old Headington. We are not opposed in principle to all new building in the conservation area – indeed there are good examples of sensitive development within Old Headington – but our view is that the role the Ruskin fields play in preserving the green setting of the conservation area is so important that any building on them will damage that setting. We feel that the number of affordable homes the Council could achieve here would never be worth the loss to the City of this centuries old green open space.

#### Stoke Place

**We also object strongly to the proposal to use Stoke Place as a major bicycle and pedestrian access route to and from the West Barton development** (assuming that motorcycles are already excluded from the proposal). This raises both conservation and safety concerns. Stoke Place is one of the few remaining rural lanes within Oxford's boundary; it is probably contemporary with the fields of Ruskin's land, and thus of great value to the conservation area, particularly in view of its present fragile

state. The widening, resurfacing, and lighting that would be essential to allow increased and safer use would destroy its character for ever.

At present, Stoke Place is a charming survival of the typical rural bridleway, but it isn't "user friendly" after dark, and it leads at its southern end into a traffic-heavy T-junction on a bend. This is a hazard for all cyclists, but if no secondary school is built north of the bypass and Option 3 of Question 12 were to be adopted, young people heading for Cheney School would be particularly at risk: cycling from north of the bypass up the bridleway to meet the dangerous conjunction of Stoke Place roadway, Dunstan/St. Andrew's Road, then – once safely past that hazard – riding into Osler Road where there is a blind bend and a two-way bus route in a narrow road to negotiate. It is difficult to picture parents being happy to let their youngsters undertake that journey twice a day.

We would strongly recommend adopting an alternative, on the grounds that preserving Stoke Place as it is would meet the requirements of conservation and would minimize potential harm to residents living north of the ringroad.

We would be grateful for your consideration of our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah King  
Chairman  
Friends of Old Headington