



Planning Policy Team
Oxford City Council
Ramsay House
10 St. Ebbe's Street
Oxford OX1 1PT

21 July 2011

Dear Sirs

Headington Car Park

The committee of the Friends of Old Headington, on behalf of its members and all residents within Old Headington, objects in the strongest possible terms to the proposal to build housing, with undercroft parking, on the car park accessed from Old High Street.

This car park is on a very sensitive site. It is bounded on three sides by the Old Headington Conservation Area, the appraisal for which is about to be accepted by the City Council as a guide to the development and preservation of the district.

Housing is not the only use of land within a city. It also has to be used for purposes ancillary to housing such as shops, schools, parks and leisure areas, and of course car parking.

This car park is used by a wide variety of people from a large area beyond Headington, including staff from the hospitals, and students and staff from Oxford Brookes University. It serves Waitrose, to which people come from a wide area of the city, as well as those who use the shops in and around the London Road. In particular, it is also used by people visiting the adjacent Bury Knowle Park and library, and by those taking small children to the recently refurbished playground. A number of nearby residents live in car-free developments, so their visitors have to use the car park. Indeed, there is often a shortage of on-street parking causing people visiting local residents to park their cars in the car park even though they may have visitors' parking permits.

It is proposed to build housing over an undercroft for parking. Undercroft car parking is usually extremely unpleasant both for residents in the accommodation above, because of noise and disruption at night, and for those parking their cars there. It tends to be a magnet for crime and anti-social behaviour. Parked cars get damaged, and the services to the accommodation above get interrupted. If it was not staffed day and night people would not dare to use it.

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Where land is needed for car parking, that use cannot be arbitrarily interrupted. If, despite the strong and considered objections of local residents, the city council is minded to carry out building works there, it would be *essential* (not merely desirable) for 100% replacement parking to be provided at all times during the works. If that cannot be done, the whole of the shopping area will be dead by the time the construction is finished. If such replacement parking is not possible, then development of the site cannot go ahead.

At the moment the car park is frequently completely full. The housing above will increase demand for parking. Even if the new homes are car-free, they will attract visitors who come by car. If the number of car parking spaces is reduced as a result of the development, this will discourage new businesses from coming to the area - and could well make some existing businesses unviable. It could also make it more difficult for people to get to the successful and growing Farmers' Market.

We repeat - for the reasons stated above - that we object in the strongest possible terms to the ill-considered proposal to build housing with undercroft car parking on the Old High Street car park.

Yours truly

Sarah King
Chairman

Copies to: Councillor David Rundle
Councillor Ruth Wilkinson
Headington Action
Coordinating Committee of Headington
Residents' Associations
Oxford Civic Society