

## Shocking decision.txt

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12:31pm Friday 30th November 2012

Sir - Views of the city spires are world famous and are widely recognised as one of Oxford's important heritage assets.

"Iconic" really is the right term in this context. Conservation area appraisals now fully recognize the amenity and heritage value of the views into and out of our conservation areas and the Roger Dudman application should on those grounds have been subject to height restrictions, just as the University's earlier proposals for high-rise library buildings in Osney were. Developers (and those who grant permission for development) should be required to take such features into account on a more consistent basis and to make it quite clear that they are doing so.

It is not enough to say that "no objections were made to the application"; how can non-professionals assess the full impact of a proposal set out in 96 documents including drawings which appeared to be indicative only (elevations had notes attached saying "to be confirmed on site" or "do not scale this drawing") and a 'design and access' statement which made little reference to views, while the photographs in Appendix 1 showed only a single spire?

It does at least seem that one benefit may yet come out of the shocking decision to allow the University to build accommodation blocks tall enough to obscure part of that superb view of the spires across Port Meadow, namely that English Heritage has agreed to fund a study of ways to improve the protection of the city's views for the future.

We welcome this initiative and very much hope that while this study is being undertaken, the city and University will work together to mitigate the impact of the current build and find a way of restoring a view which so enriches Oxford and contributes to its world-famous image.

Sarah King, Chairman, Friends of Old Headington

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