



Chairman: Sarah King 1, The Croft, Old Headington, OX3 9BT

7 March 2013

**Planning Application 13/00311 Partial demolition of existing house and demolition of existing garages and outbuildings. Erection of two storey side and rear extension. Provision of new access, car parking and turning area. Rebuilding of stone boundary wall fronting Old High Street.**

The Committee of the Friends of Old Headington wish to comment on behalf of their members, and particularly those resident in Old High Street. Bearing in mind that the application involves two specific heritage assets (the Old High Street and the house at no. 29), as well as the wider conservation area, we would draw your attention to the National Planning Policy Framework.

This states that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved, and the NPPF Practice Guide sets out reasons why a development might be favourable to a heritage asset, for example “It sustains or enhances the significance of the heritage asset and the contribution of its setting” and “it is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment”.

The Old High Street is of enormous value to the Conservation Area (see the *Conservation Area Appraisal*), and no. 29 is the first house in the Conservation Area in that street, so it is essential that any development permitted here benefits the heritage assets involved. We feel that it is the more important, in view of the decades of dereliction the house has suffered, that the Council and local community should not settle for a proposal simply because it is an improvement on previous entirely inappropriate alternatives.

We welcome the proposed restoration of the original house and the use of conservation grade materials; however, the scale and bulk of the extension is unacceptable: it will dominate no. 33 at 2-storey height, and it will change the character of the street by filling in one of the gaps which create valuable spaces in the organic mix of buildings, and obscuring the view of trees in Bury Knowle Park.

The repeated use of the word ‘subservient’ in the Design and Access statement does not reflect the reality of the relationship of the extension to the original house; the scale and bulk of the extension seems in fact likely to change the role of the original house from ‘main building’ to ‘19th century part’ of a substantial modern house. The wholesale demolition of

all the outbuildings would also result in the loss of character currently provided by the low range of older buildings adjacent to the house.

We are also concerned about access for vehicles and potential safety problems. Old High Street carries a lot of traffic, and this section in particular, close to the car-park, cafes, shops and London Road, is busy with pedestrians and vehicles parking and manoeuvring. If residents at no. 29 were to reverse out, for example, this could constitute a serious risk to people and vehicles on road or footway.

As the application stands, it would in our view fail to enhance or preserve the existing amenities, heritage assets, and historical context from which Old Headington currently benefits. We therefore strongly recommend refusal of the existing proposal, and suggest that the extension be reduced to a single storey, some of the outbuildings be retained, and safer access be included in any future application.

Yours faithfully,

Veronica Hurst

(for the Committee of the Friends of Old Headington)