



**The Friends of Old Headington wish to make the following comments concerning the **Addendum to the Barton Sustainability Appraisal (CD 7.23)****

**Policy BA 7:** we note that the option of crossing the A40 at Stoke Place is regarded as neutral with respect to Objective 13: to conserve and enhance Oxford's Biodiversity. We suggest, in the light of the ecological survey showing the nearby presence of protected bird and bat species, that any upgrading of Stoke Place as a major crossing-point for cyclists and pedestrians would potentially entail a failure to meet Objective 13. Thinning vegetation and lighting at dusk (and indeed the undertaking of any significant work) would inevitably destabilize existing local wildlife habitats.

The same objection applies to the Foxwell Drive option, since that is likely to affect either the protected species in the Ruskin Fields or in the green strip/nature reserve on the perimeter of Northway.

We therefore suggest that the assessment for Objective 13 be amended to reflect the negative ecological impact of implementing Option 3.

**Ruskin College proposals:** we are pleased to see that the Council has included Ruskin College's latest development proposal (Option 3) in this Addendum, since the updated and detailed Sustainability Appraisal shows conclusively that even a relatively small scale development on the Ruskin fields would have a detrimental effect on the Old Headington Conservation Area, the neighbouring community of Northway, and local biodiversity.

We note that the SA confirms that the impact of even the smaller-scale proposed development on local traffic is likely to be considerable; the Council has estimated 300 car journeys over a 12 hour period. This would clearly increase the existing problem of rat-running through neighbouring communities, particularly the conservation area of Old Headington, which is the obvious route to the shops of Headington and to major local employers such as the universities and hospitals.

Ruskin's fields play a vital role in providing the open and rural setting of the Old Headington Conservation Area, a fact which has convinced generations of councillors and planners to afford them special protection. (Please consider also our submission to the Sites and Housing SA for this consultation and for further detail). This role was re-emphasized in the recent *Conservation Area Appraisal*. We are glad the Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal recognizes the vital importance of the fields in this regard.

Given the extent to which the Council's Sustainability Appraisal confirms the unsuitability of the fields as a development site, it seems a missed opportunity not to

designate them as a Protected Open Space, particularly as the authors of the Sustainability Appraisal state that “the impacts of development constraint in perpetuity are likely to be very similar to those of a ‘do nothing’ option”. A decision to recognize officially that the fields have a special status within the conservation area would result not only in the preservation of a much-valued feature but would also have the advantage in the long term of saving the resources of the Council; would-be developers; local organizations, and amenity groups who are currently engaged in repeatedly debating the question.

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