



The Friends of Abingdon
Civic Society

Comments from The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society to the Planning Inspectorate 19-06-11

Application 10/01677/FUL

APP/V3120/A/11/2152242/NWF

This application involves the demolition of Champion House in Wootton Road, Abingdon and its replacement by 24 sheltered apartments. Members of The Friends of Abingdon have considered the application and make the following points.

- Champion House was an Edwardian family house designed by a well known and respected architect of the time. There is some sadness that a building that is of considerably higher quality than most of the local examples presented in the photographs by the applicant should be demolished. We are in general concerned that interesting family houses in Abingdon are being demolished to make way for high density development. Outside the centre, the town relies on gardens to provide green space and an attractive environment.
- The replacement building is not at all popular with our group for a number of reasons. Some people are not happy with the overall appearance, but we are mostly concerned about the density of the proposed development and the access from the narrowest part of Wootton Road - for both pavement and roadway.
- The site is not only next door to John Mason School, but Wootton Road is a very busy road for both traffic and pedestrians including many children and young people who walk or cycle to several other schools and Abingdon and Witney College. The schools also generate a great deal of traffic as do the nearby shopping centre and North West Abingdon residential estates.
- We also think that 8 parking spaces are not sufficient for such a development of 24 apartments. It looks as though the developers expect the residents to be active as there are minimal communal facilities and no sign as yet of warden accommodation. Given that active retired people often keep a car for fairly irregular use, where will they park it for long periods? Friends and relatives and also care workers are likely to be regular visitors, where will they park? There are already parking problems on the Fitzharris estate.
- There is also concern about the cramped nature of the apartments and the lack of outside amenity areas. Retired people might have to use walking aids or even wheelchairs. Unless it is intended that they should be uprooted again from their homes, there seems to be little consideration given to such needs. The kitchens and hallways, in particular, look very tiny. It is also felt that the development does not take account of the social needs of the residents. Retired people need to keep active socially for their health and well-being. Living rooms that are between 9 and 10 feet wide are too small to accommodate even small groups of visitors such as family or friends (e.g. book groups, or church groups). The dining areas also seem too small to accommodate more than 3 or 4 people round a small table.

In summary, we agree with the local residents' objections and the officer's report and hope you will consider upholding the refusal of planning permission for this application.

The Friends of Abingdon executive member for planning

19-06-2011