

Objections to Development at the Ex Telephone Exchange building, Benson.

P20/S2712/FUL

My objections to the Application are these:-

1. The site is tiny and the proposed dwelling totally out of keeping with the surrounding houses, three of which are grade 2 listed, plus Benson War Memorial. The appearance of the intended dwelling is reminiscent of half a Nissen hut of WW2 with absolutely no aesthetic merit and would detract from the fine proportions and classic style of the nearby architecturally important buildings in Benson.
2. The application speaks of 're-using the existing access and parking area' Let us be clear there never was vehicle access or parking area on the site and it is disingenuous to suggest otherwise. I have lived at the Old Vicarage for 51 years and in all that time have never seen a vehicle drive onto or park on the site even when it was a working Exchange. The lowered kerb would give the impression that access existed but as I recall this was done on the initiative of Mr Jones at some previous attempt to develop the site (there have been two before the present one). The danger posed by allowing car movements at this very busy road junction either backing out of or driving into the supposed access is extremely high.
3. I would not welcome a development cheek by jowl to my house that by its paucity of aesthetic merit would seriously diminish the value of my house and those around me in Castle Square and I cannot understand the Conservation Officer's sanguine attitude to what can only be described as a ghastly eye-sore.
4. It should be well understood that the trees which stand between the present building and the road are not part of the site and as far as I know are not owned by the applicant. I would strongly object to any harm coming to the welcome green screen they provide when in leaf.

Conclusion. The Planning Committee should ask themselves this - would they grant permission for a tiny dwelling reminiscent of an industrial building on a piece of land no bigger than a pocket handkerchief, with no garden and within a stone's throw of three fine listed buildings in the heart of an Oxfordshire village of historical importance if it were not for the fact that it replaces an old Exchange building no longer in use. Would not their aesthetic sensibilities be outraged by the suggestion in normal circumstances. Were it not for the fact that one eye sore is replaced by what would seem to be another should not be an issue here and should not be reason to grant permission. Pulling the old building down and planting trees would be a far better use of the site.

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