



**Response from Wirksworth Civic & History Society to proposed planning for the conversion of Waltham House to form 5 residential flat and the erection of 37 residential flats in its grounds.**

Thank you for giving Wirksworth Civic Society the opportunity to comment on the planning application for the proposed sheltered accommodation for the elderly at Waltham House in Wirksworth.

We would like to state our support, in general terms, for the alteration of Waltham House and its grounds to provide sheltered housing for the elderly. However, we object to the scheme in the current planning application as we feel it is over development of the site.

Waltham House is Grade II listed and situated in the heart of Wirksworth Conservation Area, the character of which is deemed so important that an Article 4 direction is in place removing certain permitted development rights.

We have no objection to the proposed alterations within the listed building as long as a conservation statement is developed by the applicant that sets out their philosophy as to what they will do as and when they alter/encounter any of the building's historically significant fabric, e.g. keeping interventions to a minimum, using traditional repair techniques and employing an appropriate level of recording.

However, in our opinion, the scale, massing and design of the proposed extension to the listed building will have an adverse affect on its setting and to the character of the conservation area. We suspect it is unlikely that a scheme can be developed in Waltham House's grounds that can sensitively accommodate 37 residential units; this seems over ambitious and is reflected in the proposals massing. The three/four storey extension is at least twice the size of the listed building and we feel that if any other use was being suggested that this massing would be considered unacceptable.

The new build element of the scheme is of monolithic proportions and we feel it will not sit happily within the intricate roof and townscape of Wirksworth. This will be especially the case when viewed from the Meadows, which is identified as a key viewpoint in Wirksworth's Conservation Area Appraisal completed in April 2001. Similarly, as shown on the application's elevations, the extension does not respond to the scale of the buildings fronting St John's Street. While we appreciate that the development will never be viewed like this we do not believe that the perspective images that also support the application are accurate. To this end we feel that accurate photographic montages are required of the development as viewed from the Meadows and from the opposite side of St John's Street. In order to do this we feel some

sort of device, e.g. polls or balloons on strings, need to be used on site to establish the exact ridge and eave heights of the new development when seen from the aforementioned view points.

It seems as if the architect has resorted to the trying to break-up the mass of the building by using a wide palette of materials. We feel that this will look too fussy and if anything is likely to draw attention to the extension.

As previously mentioned we do not feel that 37 units can be sympathetically accommodated in the grounds of Waltham House, but it might be worth considering other configurations that break up the massing of the extension and give a more varied roofscape. However, we feel pastiche must be avoided and we would be unlikely to support a scheme that was too 'bitty'.

On a more detailed level, radius kerbs are shown at the access point to the site. We feel that this intervention will introduce a modern highway detail to the centre of Wirksworth that will jar with its historic character. We do not understand why the access arrangement cannot stay roughly as it is. Also on an operational level, due to the current configuration, the south facing land is being used for car parking and the 'reserved' access strip to the Meadows, this leaves a relatively small north facing garden as amenity space for the residents.

In addition, we are concerned about any hint of future development on the Meadows suggested by the size of the proposed road onto the site.

Finally we would like to suggest that the scheme is referred to OPUN the regional design review body to get a more objective response to the design. Their contact details are:

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We hope you find our comments useful and constructive and we would appreciate it if you would keep us informed of any further developments in the scheme.

Yours.....