



**REPORT FROM PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE**  
**on applications dated January 2008 to January 2009**  
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The group has continued to meet regularly in Ramsay House to examine planning applications which we select from the planning lists on many and various criteria. They include such aspects as whether a proposed alteration would be visible from the street, or would over-shadow or invade the privacy of a neighbouring property, or would be out-of-keeping with the neighbourhood, or involves demolition of a feature with historical interest. We are concerned also with other issues such as design of new buildings and car access and parking. We estimate that we look at about half the applications made. 2703 applications were registered during 2008 (nearly 200 fewer than in 2007). Most of those we see we think are quite acceptable, but for about 10 each month (118 in 2008) a letter of objection with detailed comments is sent to the Planning Office. Of our 118 'Objectionable Applications of 2008' thirty-three were refused by the Planning Officers or Area Committee, so we are pleased that they agreed with us. Twelve were withdrawn, so perhaps we had persuaded applicants to reconsider, and they might come back with an amended plan, usually an improved one. Thirty-one of the applications were permitted, sometimes because, though less than ideal, it was considered difficult to maintain the objections at a possible appeal. The remainder may remain on our card index for years.

An exasperating type of application in 2008 was for **Banners attached to lamp-posts**, advertising the pantomime or some other large event. In 2005 the organisation *Oxford Inspires* gained permission to display twenty-nine such banners near the entrances into the city on the main radial roads. In 2008 the same organisation applied to renew these permissions, and to add a further seventy-three banners on eleven sites in all, totalling one hundred and two banners. We have always objected that many banners distract road users and obscure views of trees, buildings and landscapes, and so it was a relief recently to be informed that the applicant had withdrawn all banners on five of the sites (London Road near Headington School, Woodstock Road near St Edwards School, Marston Ferry Road, Frideswide Square, and St Clements), and seven on other sites had been refused. This is our third recent battle against advertisement street clutter, as in 2007 we had to consider the suitability of advertising on many of the new and improved bus shelters, and likewise public telephones with rotating advertisement screens. We believe that although advertisements may contribute cheerfully in commercial areas near shops, they are not appropriate in residential streets, and particularly not in Conservation Areas.

Many buildings need to be defended from demolition or drastic alteration. They deserve to be treasured for the charm and variety they give to Oxford, and for the history they carry; but because they are not quite special or perfect enough to be listed, they are vulnerable. One such is a small house in a pleasant garden at **56 James Street**, on the corner of St Mary's Road. Like some in Cowley Road this has attractive Victorian gothic windows with small pointed arches and little carved stone columns. We objected to a proposal in 2007 to demolish and replace it by a featureless 3-storey block of five flats. This was refused, as was a repeat application in 2008. Another is **No. 276 Woodstock Road**, a small nineteenth-century stone cottage, and an interesting reminder of an early Summertown. A proposal was made to extend and convert it to five flats, completely destroying its character: this was refused following objection. **Bartlemas Nursery School, (or 269 Cowley Road)** is in the remarkable little Conservation Area which includes an old farmhouse and the buildings of Oxford's mediaeval Bartlemas Leper Chapel and Hospital (now a house). A proposal by Oriel College to demolish the school and build student accommodation on the site would intrude on their peace and privacy unless very sensitively designed: proposals so far have been refused. Another case is **26 Lathbury Road**, a house in Arts and Crafts style, rare in Oxford. Despite alterations it still has interest and charm. Demolition, and replacement by Victorian pastiche semi-detached houses, has been proposed several times, and so far refused.

Other applications included the usual mix of extensions, demolition and replacement with flats. A shockingly wasteful proposal has been made by the County Council to demolish most of Peers School, Littlemore, to build a new Academy, but as this seems to be general policy, resistance to it would probably be ineffective.