

Please note the following objections to this proposal, based on both its presentation and its likely consequences.

The application is characteristically disingenuous. Principally, it describes the proposed buildings as "retirement dwellings" having an "age restriction for older people (60 years)." Some people living three quarters of a mile from the castle, who are completely unable to see it, support the idea of accommodation in the village for "senior aged persons" and "for the retired." I don't know what they think happens to people on their 60th birthday, but, in any case, the current retirement age is 66, and it will rise to 67 by 2028. Where the figure of 60 comes from, I do not know. Is it an attempt to give the impression that the development will be inhabited by shuffling old dears who won't get in anybody's way? Nowadays, I imagine it is unlikely that many 60 year olds will welcome being described as "aged", but what it does mean is that a 63 year old menopausal company director will be entirely within his rights to buy one of the properties and ride his Harley--Davidson around the enclave. Can someone from Blue Cedar provide the rationale for the choice of this figure?

The application contains the normal quota of padding and warm words, intended to give the impression of thoroughness by sheer volume. A lot of it is anything they can lay their hands on. If we ignore that, then the usual flaws become visible. Many of the reservations are those that accompany any application, and it is to be hoped that they will be treated objectively. It is certainly true that that section of Clifton Road and a large part of Earls Lane are notorious for drivers exceeding the speed limit. There does not seem to be any reason why extending the speed limit there would be any more effective than the extension of the speed limit has been on Banbury Road near the junction with The Swere.

However, the main problem is the potential effect on the Castle Grounds. One only has to look out from Betty's Bench across the allotments to Chapmans Lane to see the deleterious effect that housing developments can have on the landscape. Blue Cedar naturally minimise the likely impact of their proposal.

The importance of maintaining the aspect of the Castle is expressed by other contributors to this discussion. I hope everyone who has an interest will read them. It should be borne in mind that people who draw up proposals for building development, large-scale events, and so on are fond of saying that they will mitigate the effects of their activities "wherever possible." Sounds reassuring. But if asked what they will do if mitigation is not possible, they, of course have to say, "We'll do it anyway."

One quote from the application reads: "The location of the development will also need to maintain the separation between the castle and the village." Of course, the development would reduce that

separation, as can be seen simply by looking at the plan, to as little as 30 yards from the Castle's northern boundary. The development would also be visible from a large section of the Castle's northern rampart and from the northern slope and top of the mound.

Another paragraph says, "The internal grounds within the bailey are used for local dog walking and formal sports pitches. This results in a more contemporary use and appearance to this feature, although its heritage significance is acknowledged by the applicant." Firstly, there are no formal sports pitches at all within the Castle Grounds. Secondly, this seems to be a rather underhand attempt to imply that the custodians of the Castle Grounds have failed in their duty to maintain the site's sanctity by allowing dog-walking, and the applicants are coming to the rescue. There is a certain snideness to that; I'm sure Bishop Odo was a dog owner.

A further consideration is a likely increase in foot traffic on the Castle, which would cause more erosion and require increased maintenance on the part of the Parish Council and English Heritage. The application says, "The future development will maintain the views both to and from Deddington Castle as much as possible, potentially enhancing them by creating enhanced access to the site and providing additional landscape management." The first part of that claim features the favourite "if possible" get-out, and I am unable to fully understand the meaning of the second part; what does "enhanced access to the site" mean? Another entrance? Might Blue Cedar find the idea of an access point for their customers too tempting? I'm sure that if they were to succeed in this application, their sales brochure would feature the proximity to the Castle Grounds as a selling point.

I would urge that this application be rejected and this historic site be protected.