



Oak Inn Destruction

Ignorant Conservative Council Against Wiltshire Heritage ... destroying valuable ancient buildings, without examining them

It was obvious to anyone that the Oak inn and brewhouse buildings were old. Visible parts were variously from roughly around 1800 and 1900 and between.

The quality of work has not again really been achieved. When knocked down, it is lost for ever. Much older structure is often within old buildings. Before demolition, Wiltshire Council was told by a local historic buildings expert that the inner structure was probably medieval. The expert advice was ignored.

Recovered timber analysis since showed that the structure was 15th century.

There were many opportunities for Wiltshire Council to consider the structures. Planning processes about the buildings were over several stages and years.

Council conservation officers who did not bother to examine the Oak buildings lacked interest, lacked competence, or, as actually happened, were ordered, from above, to do nothing. Wiltshire Council's conservation role is a sham.

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy says: 'elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, which create a sense of local character, will be conserved and their potential towards social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will be exploited...'

The Oak buildings were obviously potentially useful for conversion to town centre homes, to fulfil the need for homes which Wiltshire Council promotes.

The Oak buildings occupied a small portion of one end of the overall site and could easily have been integrated into the Aldi supermarket development, had Wiltshire Council thought about it and made it a planning condition. Despite its fine words, Wiltshire Council continues to encourage shopping by motor-car.

The site of the old Oak buildings has been made into shoppers' parking space.

There was no useful publicity or proper consultation about the Oak buildings.

We are left to search for minutes or Wiltshire Council's obscure notices - without knowing where or when to look. Wiltshire Council has had complaints about this over many years. Wiltshire Council had its own Wiltshire Magazine, distributed throughout Wiltshire, but did not include the impending fate of the Oak Inn.

Planned destruction of the buildings was kept discreet by Wiltshire Council. WC's planning consent for the supermarket did not mention demolition of the historic Oak buildings. Westbury Heritage Society wrote to Wiltshire Council over a year before; it was fobbed-off in a disingenuous and misleading manner.

English Heritage West Bristol staff were unhelpful. A listing application had to be struggled with. This was a disproportionately difficult exercise. Wiltshire Buildings Record was the only useful expert body. Wiltshire Council was asked for a Building Preservation Notice, just to allow the time for an actual scrutiny, which had never been done. Wiltshire Council bosses instructed against it. English Heritage was worse than useless by accepting this wrong decision, which followed a series of wrong decisions, all made without examination.

Medieval structure was ignorantly destroyed. Nobody can now dispute this.

Wiltshire Council obviously failed in its duty to protect local heritage. The Conservative leadership of Wiltshire Council visibly wanted these old buildings cleared away regardless, for car parking and for the Swindonisation of Wiltshire with the proliferation of lots of motor-vehicle-served shopping experiences.

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