

Supporters of Ashton Gardens - Press Release

Timing:

- For immediate publication

Subject:

- **SOAG Calls for plans to be delayed**

Summary:

- SOAG highlights problems with the Newfield Jones' apartments plan, and calls for a delay whilst the listing of the Ashton Institute and the registration of the footpaths as rights of way are decided.
 - They also announce that Charles Tuke, one of the architects of Blackpool Tower was responsible for bringing the Institute into existence.
-

At Fylde Council's planning meeting, SOAG members called for Newfield Jones' planning application for a block of flats to be deferred pending further consideration.

Commenting on access, SOAG's Audrey Preston said, "There is not sufficient landscaping space within the developer's site. The building goes right up to the wall of Ashton Gardens. Even when the site is finished, his workmen will have to wheelbarrow materials in and out of Ashton Gardens and get them over a wall before they can maintain the building. There isn't even enough room to put a ladder up to clean the windows."

Security for the occupants of the flats was an issue too. SOAG's Secretary Jon Harrison said the dense planting that would be undertaken in the gardens to create hedges, shrubs and trees would allow people of nefarious intent to hide within a few feet of ground floor flat windows.

Echoing these themes, Chairman Fred Moor said, "In addition to several access and security problems that should have been designed out as part of the planning process, the drawings still have technical errors, and they require the closure of a public right of way."

In a surprise announcement at the meeting, John Hayfield of Newfield Jones said he was about to submit an amended plan that would move the building between 2 and 3 metres away from the gardens, and this would allow the right of way to be kept open.

Mr Moor also said the developer had prepared a much smaller scheme of only 37 flats that would not require the loss of any of Ashton Gardens, but the Council had ruled this plan "invalid".

SOAG has asked the Government to protect the Ashton Institute, the Empire/Plaza building and Aked's garage by listing them, but no decision has yet been made. "We believe the Councillors have been badly advised on this matter, and that it is premature to be granting permission to develop when the buildings might soon be listed", he added.

To support their listing request, SOAG has produced a booklet setting out the history of the Ashton Institute from 1888 to 2005. They say the Institute was the brainchild of Charles Tuke of the Maxwell and Tuke architectural partnership that designed Blackpool Tower. SOAG say between 1888 and 1890, Tuke convened a meeting of St Anne's worthies at the St Annes Hydro to form a young men's institute to become a rallying place for the youth of the town during winter evenings and a pleasant rendezvous for summer visitors, and this has upgraded the historic importance of the Institute. They believe this news needs to be fully considered before the site is developed.

Councillors evidently did not agree, and voted not to defer the granting of permission. Then, after being advised by officers not to amend the plans that had already been submitted by adding fencing and moving the building, they did the only thing left available to them and approved them.

After the meeting, Mr Moor said most people would think it was a waste of time approving plans that the developer had just said he was going to change.

Release ends

Information for editors

Newfield Jones latest plan is available for public inspection at the Town Hall or the One Stop Shop. Details from Julie Cary. (JulieC@fylde.gov.uk)

"The Ashton Institute - an outline history 1888 to 2005" booklet is available from SOAG at £2.50 per copy. Ring 01253 728047 for details.

SOAG is a not-for-profit membership organisation that exists to protect, preserve and enhance Ashton Gardens, St Annes.

Our surveys have consistently shown that both residents and visitors oppose the sale of any of the gardens, and keeping the gardens intact is more important than selling part of them to fund a lottery scheme.

Contacts:

Chairman of SOAG, Fred Moor, ☎ 01253 728047.

email: chairman@ashtongardens.org.uk

18 Sandhurst Avenue, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire. FY8 2DA

Secretary of SOAG, Jon Harrison, ☎ 01253 724298.

email: secretary@ashtongardens.org.uk

6 Nateby Close, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, FY8 3PW

President of SOAG, Arnold Sumner ☎ 01253 721608

10 Dorset Road, St Annes FY8 2ED