

Village waits as old school's fate is sealed



Planning battleground... the former infants' school at Wheatley

THE FUTURE of a former infants' school hangs in the balance today as district councillors decide whether to approve plans to knock it down and build houses on the site.

Parish councillors and local residents have done everything they can to save the old one-storey stone building in Wheatley, including writing to the Department of the Environment to get it listed, but without success.

The building, which ceased to be an infants' school more than 15 years ago, has been used as a meeting place for the village playgroup but has been empty for several years now.

Planning applications for the school

By FIONA TARRANT

were submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council by both Wheatley Parochial Church Council and by property developers Kibswell Homes.

The church council is seeking renewal of outline permission to convert the school house into a home and build three further bungalows, while Kibswell wants to demolish it and build four houses on the site.

Both plans were considered by district council planners last month, but a decision was deferred until a site visit, followed by a meeting due to be held today.

Senior planning officer for the

northern area, Mr David Hignell, said the decision was deferred after the parish council and members of the public objected to Kibswell's plans to demolish the existing building.

He said planning officers had recommended approval of the church council's renewal and rejection of Kibswell's plans. "We would like to see the building retained," he said.

Wheatley Parish Council clerk, Mrs Pam Simmonds, said the DoE had refused to list the building and the whole village would be sorry to see it go.

"We would deplore the removal of the infants' school and regard it as an important feature in the village," she said.