

# Comments for Planning Application 13/00832/FUL

## Application Summary

Application Number: 13/00832/FUL

Address: Former Ruskin College Site Walton Street Oxford Oxfordshire

Proposal: Redevelopment of existing student accommodation and teaching site comprising the demolition of all buildings, with exception of the 1913 Ruskin College facade to Walton Street and Worcester Place, and erection of 90 student study rooms, 3 Fellows/Staff residential rooms, teaching facilities, library archive social space, landscaping and associated works.

Case Officer: Angela Fettiplace

## Customer Details

Name: Professor Victor Flynn

Address: 25 Worcester Place Oxford

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbours

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

- Amount of development on site
- Effect on adjoining properties
- Effect on character of area
- Effect on privacy
- Effect on traffic
- Height of proposal
- Light - daylight/sunlight
- Noise and disturbance
- On-street parking
- Parking provision

Comment: Dear Planning Committee,

These are my comments concerning the application: 13/00832/FUL for the redevelopment of the former Ruskin site by Exeter College. I am the owner and occupier of 25 Worcester Place, directly facing the proposed site. This is one of the six terraced two-storey mid-19th century houses in this conservation area which would feel the fullest effect of these proposals, being right on the pavement (and not set back from the road) and directly facing two large proposed new structures in the application.

There should not be any cycle racks directly opposite any of the houses 23-28 Worcester Place (they would be a source of constant noise and untidiness, a very short distance from the front doors of the houses opposite, which are built right on the pavement) and preferably none at all on Worcester Place. Nor should there be any pavement extension on Worcester Place; this should simply become much needed residents parking.

It is proposed to build a Lecture Hall, directly across from 23,24 Worcester Place. Note that this represents a substantial change in use for this part of Worcester Place; currently the street is entirely residential on both sides of the street, from 25 Worcester Place to the West. Exeter stated in its public displays that "the auditorium is intended principally for use as a lecture theatre for students, though the College would like to make it available for occasional public lectures or recitals". It would be very much appreciated if it could be explicitly mention in the planning permission that it will ordinarily be used for quiet purposes, such as lectures (and not for anything amplified). The construction materials should be thick and well soundproofed and there should not be any openings directly onto Worcester Place. This sloping wall should not be shiny or metallic, but should instead be made from a non-reflective material, such as stone cladding.

It would be helpful if a comment could be written into the planning permission that there should be 24 hour pedestrian access for site residents via the main entrance on Walton Street (the most direct entrance from town), and that students should be encouraged to use this. The historic building (on the corner of Walton Street and Worcester Place) is already far too high for its location; the proposal to increase its height is highly insensitive to the effect the skyline and the small houses in the local conservation area; it would make this building even more oppressive, blocking light. Any alterations to this historic building should should not raise the height.

The existing building opposite 27,28 Worcester Place is proposed to be demolished, and replaced with a much taller (about 1.5 storeys taller) building right on the pavement of Worcester Place (and joined onto the historic building). The architects have tried to mitigate this by shaping the upper levels into a curved slope. This is highly deceptive, in the sense that there is essentially only one main viewing area from which this extra height will be hidden: namely, from ground level directly across the street. Worcester Place slopes downwards to the West; when viewed from a side angle (near 23,24 Worcester Place) the upper floors of this very tall building will oppressively look down from a great height, BLOCKING LIGHT to the small mid-19th century houses on the street. Even from inside the houses directly opposite this building, the view from the second floor windows of 23-28 Worcester Place will see this substantial extra height. If anything, the current building (which is to be demolished) is already too high. Furthermore, it is highly inconsiderate that student rooms are proposed to be placed in this building (on the second and third floors) right on Worcester Place, looking down upon, and directly facing 27,28 Worcester Place; these rooms (which have windows right on Worcester Place) should all be offices, as was the case with the current building, as it was used by Ruskin College. Student rooms in this new building should have windows which are interior to the site.

There is also a separate proposed main residential building behind the lecture hall (away from the street) which will be very high. This is mitigated by being back from the street, but even taking this into account it is very high and will be seen for some distance; it could also do with being lowered at least one storey, with a corresponding reduction in rooms. There seems to be a proposed loading area on the street (whereas Ruskin College had a garage for service vehicles to load and unload off the street). It would be helpful if the service vehicles could tuck sufficiently away that they do not block traffic (for example, by having the pavement slope to the street, so that service vehicles can tuck partly onto the pavement). This would at least mean that service vehicles, and the noise of both the vehicles and unloading, could come at civilised hours (and not at unsociable

hours, such as 6 am). Perhaps also some service vehicles could unload at the extended pavement area on Walton Street. In general, the proposals are trying to create too many rooms, and the proposed buildings are of too great a height. There should be no increases in height on the site (neither by increasing the height of existing buildings nor by replacing buildings with higher ones). There are 90 proposed student rooms, plus rooms for Fellows, which is overall a substantial increase in previous use. The overall layout of the buildings around a courtyard is fine, but the buildings should all be substantially reduced in height, set back from the pavement, and the total number of residential rooms reduced by at least 30, both to be a less dramatic change from previous use, and to be more sensitive to the existing residences on Worcester Place.

Best regards, Victor Flynn