

29 April 2013
26 Worcester Place
OX1 2JW
Silvia Pugliese

To Whom It May Concern.

Dear Sir/ Madam

My comments relate to application:
13/00832/FUL for the redevelopment of the
former Ruskin site by Exeter College.

I have looked through the supporting documents
on the planning application. In the below,
please, find the list of my concerns.

(1) The Auditorium/Lecture Hall

(directly across from 23,24 Worcester Place). It would be helpful to have something explicitly written into the planning permission, giving restrictions or guidelines as to its use. In the public displays, Exeter themselves stated: "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". So, it would be good to have something explicitly mentioned in the planning permission that it will ordinarily be used for quiet purposes, such as lectures (and not ordinarily used for anything loud, such as electronically produced or electronically enhanced music).

It would also be helpful to be reassured about the thickness and soundproofing quality of the materials used in its construction.

Furthermore, the curved wall facing Worcester place should not be made from a shiny metallic material that would reflect light into the windows of the houses opposite.

(2) A large number of undergraduates will be using the site, and we do not want them to be loudly returning to the site via the gates on Worcester Place. It would be helpful to have a comment written into the planning permission that there should be 24 hour pedestrian access via the main entrance on Walton Street, and that students should be encouraged to use this. This was stated as their intention at the public meeting (in response to a question), so we are merely requesting here that a comment along these lines be included in the planning permission.

(3) The proposal includes cycle racks "for visitors and local residents" opposite the houses at 27,28 Worcester Place. These are absolutely not welcomed by local residents, so it seems curious for these to be imposed as a "benefit" for local residents, when their presence is so unwelcome to us. It is worth pointing out that there has never been a problem on this street with cycles: during the operation of the Ruskin site there were no problems with cycles being left loose or locked to posts, so there is no existing problem which requires the existence of such racks. These racks will inevitably be a source of noise and untidiness, on what is traditionally a quiet residential street. Inevitably, students on the site (particularly those living near to these racks) would begin to use them as long term locations for their cycles.

Furthermore, visitors should ordinarily be using the main entrance on Walton Street, so if there were to be cycle racks, it would surely be better to have a very small number (purely for visitors) on Walton Street right next to the main Walton Street entrance to the Lodge (as part of the extended pavement area).

It would be better for the pavement on Worcester Place to be left alone (not extended) and for this to be residential parking.

(4) There is a proposal to plant 3 trees directly across from number 27,28 Worcester Place. These should be potted (together with official documentation that they are potted) so that the root systems cannot affect the houses directly opposite (which are very close).

Furthermore they should be of a species of tree which cannot grow too high. As long as these requirements are met, the location of the trees is

reasonable, in the sense that they will be directly in front of a building, softening the effect of that building, and the trees will not block any light of the houses opposite (beyond what is already being blocked by the buildings).

(5) The proposed portion of the building opposite 27,28 Worcester Place (to be joined directly onto the historic building) is higher than the building it is replacing. In particular, it should be noted that Worcester Place slopes down to the West, and when the side of this structure is seen from 23-25 Worcester Place (and the pavement along that part of Worcester Place) the top level of this building will look down from an oppressive height.

This building should be more modest in scale, both in width and height.

(6) The loading area should be arranged so that service vehicles do not block Worcester Place (a narrow one-way street), presumably by tapering the pavement in front of the gate so that vehicles can tuck close to the gate (like a driveway). It seems peculiar that they have not taken the opportunity for the Westernmost pathway to be a road for service vehicles; it would surely be more sensible (and less disruptive for local residents) for vehicles to enter the site, and unload internally (as was described in the November public display).

We hope that there will not be noisy loading and unloading, and that this will not happen at unsociable times. The proposed loading area is very close to residential housing immediately opposite, in contrast with Ruskin College, where the service vehicles were able to enter the garage. Perhaps the area at the main entrance on Walton Street could alternatively be used for service vehicles.

(7) We would hope for assurances as to regulations and policing of noise in student areas, with thick double glazing, and Junior Deans in the Western part of the site to keep an eye on noise.

(since the Porters on Walton Street may not always hear what is happening in the Western part of the site).

(8) It is extremely inconsiderate that some student rooms are proposed on

the building immediately opposite 27,28 Worcester Place (the 2nd and 3rd floors are proposed to be student rooms); these will be right on the pavement, directly opposite residential houses which are themselves right on the pavement, and they will be replacing a structure previously used as offices.

It would surely be more courteous to local residents for the rooms of this new building which have windows on Worcester Place to be used to offices, rather than student accommodation.

(9) More generally, the proposals are cramming too much into the space available, including numbers of people (more than the number effectively using the site previously), building height and proximity to the street. The broad design is reasonable, but it must be softened, reduced in height and size (particularly the portions on Worcester Place), and preferably moved slightly back from the street, and reduced in total capacity (by about 15-20 rooms).

The proposed design has been highly insensitive to the residential housing on 24-28 Worcester Place.

Best Regards

Silvia Pugliese