

# 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: Miss May Chan

Address: Worcester College 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
- General dislike or support for proposal
- Height of proposal
- Light - daylight/sunlight
- Noise and disturbance
- Open space provision

Comment: I empathise with Exeter College's need and desire for expansion and their wish to build a substantially-sized collegiate space for accommodating its students, teaching activities and social functions. But I have the following concerns about visual appearance, potential for shadowing, streetscape, and noise management of the proposed building.

VIEW FROM GRADE II\* LISTED WORCESTER COLLEGE ORCHARD and GRADE I LISTED TERRACE BUILDING

While the proposal takes streetscape into account, it fails to take into adequate account the view from the adjacent Grade II\* listed Orchard and Grade I listed Terrace within Worcester College. The student residential buildings inside Worcester College visible from the orchard are only 2 storeys high. But the proposed building will be 1 to 3 storeys higher (depending on which section) than our low-rise buildings, and the severe adverse effect of this can only be partially appreciated from the picture on p. 65 of the "Full Design and Access Statement" document. The proposal to

use stainless steel roofing will also emphasise the presence of a disproportionately large building. Even though the proposal calls for a "coloured and textured" stainless steel, as the upper-left image on p. 59 of "Full Design and Access Statement" shows, the steel is still highly reflective and will contrast sharply with the lack of any such reflective surfaces on any of the neighbouring buildings. Given that the roof has a convex shape and is substantially higher than neighbouring buildings, this means that sunlight can be reflected from a wide range of angles, causing glare to be seen most part of day when viewed from parts of the Grade II\* listed orchard and Grade I listed Terrace building.

## SHADOWING OF AND BLOCKING OF VIEW FROM RUSKIN LANE QUAD & SAINSBURY BUILDING

In Section 3.5 "Streetscape Context" (p. 35) of the document "Full Design and Access Statement", the design team only assess sunlight to Worcester Place at 12 noon in June and September, but they fail to mention that the proposed design will cause significant shadowing of the adjacent buildings and quad to the west, from the moment the sun rises in the east to noon. This means that for a significant portion of day, the adjacent buildings and quad will be cast in shadow.

The Sainsbury Building won the 1984 Civic Trust Award for its aesthetic integration with the surrounding lake and view from the Grade II\* listed orchard. The Ruskin Lane Quad is an aesthetically designed open space which is integrated very closely with the neighbouring low-rise buildings, so that its design is minimally intrusive while bordering the Grade II\* listed orchard.

However, the proposed building will destroy the aesthetic coherence in this area by shadowing and destroying the view from the Ruskin Lane quad and award-winning Sainsbury Building.

## STREETSCAPE CONTEXT

In section 5.5, while they emphasise that the proposed design incorporates "varied massing" from the tall 1913 Ruskin Building to "descen[d] in height westward along Worcester Place to meet their domestic neighbours," the proposed building has an accommodation block on the south side which is in fact a full storey higher than the original 1980 building. The proposal emphasises that setting back the accommodation block to the south will create more "open" space, and that planting of three trees will create more "greenery", but this is deceptive. The image of the proposed plan on p. 61 of the "Full Design and Access Statement" document shows that the building will follow the facade line of the 1936 building and form one solid wall all the way westward. This leaves only a thin strip of pavement (as the proposed building is further forward from the original 1960s and 1980s sections) and it is not clear that 3 trees OUTSIDE this wall will leave enough pavement space and the assymetry with the opposite side of the street created by 3 lone trees might actually decrease visual appeal. If the design team are as keen to create an open, green space as they suggest, they should not make the west end of the proposed building loom a FULL STOREY ABOVE the original 1980 building and build a bare solid wall further

forward from the original 1960s and 1980s sections and stick 3 token trees onto the pavement. Instead, they should revise the west end of the building to be one storey lower, and create more inner courtyard space for their 3 trees.

They also fail to mention that while setting back the student accommodation section further south might allow more sunlight to fall onto the street, the increased height of the proposed building (compared to the current building) will completely block the view from 21 and 22 Worcester Place houses, and partially block the view from 20 and 19 Worcester Place houses into the Grade II\* listed Orchard and the Grade I listed 1714 Worcester College Terrace.

I quote the following from your adopted Local Plan on p. 36 of the "Full Design and Access Statement" with my emphasis in upper case:

Policy CP.8 Designing Development to Relate to its Context

All new and extended buildings should RELATE TO THEIR SETTING to STRENGTHEN, ENHANCE AND PROTECT LOCAL CHARACTER.

- the siting, massing and design of proposed development creates an APPROPRIATE VISUAL RELATIONSHIP with the form, grain, SCALE, MATERIALS and DETAILS of the surrounding area
- proposed development on sites with high public visibility enhances the style and perception of the area, particularly by RETAINING FEATURES WHICH ARE IMPORTANT

It is clear that the proposed design does not match its setting in scale, materials and will lead to significant shadowing of neighbouring buildings.

#### NOISE CONCERNS

I am concerned that a big Lecture Theatre with potential musical events will create a noise concern for neighbouring residents, so hope that the hotel-standard noise control measures they propose will be strictly implemented.

I hope the above concerns are addressed before building work commences.