

The South Jericho Residents' Association (SouthJRA)

November 11th 2013

Letter to members of the West Area Planning Committee

We members of the South Jericho Residents' Association are sending you this outline of our objections to **Planning Application No13/00832/FUL** because you may find a quick summary helpful as you prepare for the Planning Meeting of December 10th 2013 when a decision will be made.

Whilst we welcome the prospect of once again having students in the former Ruskin College Site, we feel that this ambitious plan is too intensive a development and neither preserves the Listed Building nor enhances this City Centre Conservation Area appropriately.

It is over-intensive as a development and overbearing in scale and previous grants for development have respected the nature of this area of residential homes and low rise buildings.

The listed Ruskin Building is already imposing, but Exeter requests planning permission for a development which:

1. Is too large: it would increase the floorspace by 39% with a corresponding increase in occupancy and traffic, including out of term conference facilities.

2. Is too high.

3. Disregards the requirement to preserve a Listed Building.

4. Goes against the low-rise scale of Jericho by adding height and mass to an already imposing building in a well established conservation area.

5. Causes an encroachment on the highway arising from the impact of intensive occupation of this site because of the Council's requirements for provision of cycle racks for student residences.

We appreciate the time you have given to the Planning Application already and believe that you will find this digest of information a help in reaching your decision.

We hope you will refuse this proposal.

Undersigned by members of South Jericho Residents Association (SouthJRA)

Chris Johnson (Chair),	24 Worcester Place
Professor Victor Flynn,	25 Worcester Place
Mark Johnson-Watts,	2 Walton Lane
Mary Keen,	4 Walton Street
Marya Lewis,	13 Walton Street
Sir Stephen Sedley,	15 Walton Street

The SouthJRA was constituted on July 7th 2013 and covers the area:
Worcester Place to Richmond Road including Walton Street (west side)
and Walton Lane.

Chair: Chris Johnson

Secretary: Mary Keen

Treasurer: Marya Lewis

Distribution list:

West Area Planning Committee:

Councillor Oscar Van Nooijen (Chair)

Councillor Michael Gotch (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Elise Benjamin

Councillor Anne-Marie Canning

Councillor Bev Clack

Councillor Colin Cook

Councillor Graham Jones

Councillor Bob Price

Councillor John Tanner

Councillor Susanna Pressell, Jericho & Osney Ward, Oxford City Council

Angela Fettiplace, Planning Officer, Oxfordshire County Council

Andrew Cooper, Case Officer , Transport Development Control, Oxfordshire County Council

Nicholas Worlledge, Head of Conservation, Oxford City Council

Members of South Jericho Residents Association

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Professor Victor Flynn, 25 Worcester Place

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Enclosure:

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1. Historic planning permission and Local Plan considerations

1982 Planning permission

Extract from the **planning application for the building of the 1980's cottages in Worcester Place, 1982** in dark red brick. Application dated 3.12.79

From A484/79 Ruskin College

Demolition of houses (Worcester Place) and erection of building to form residential, library and teaching accommodation and 3 garages [These are the red brick cottages beyond the 1960's block on Worcester Place, going west]

Permission was granted with restrictions in design "**Reason... to achieve a proper relationship with neighbouring property and development in keeping with the character of the area.**"

Further permission and approval by the Local Planning Authority was needed before work could commence "**Reason In the interest of visual amenity**"

Oxford City Planning Department site

"ADOPTED OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2001 – 2016 this currently applies

November 2005

2.4.1 Policy CP1 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Planning permission will only be granted for development which :

Shows a high standard of design, including landscape treatment, **that respects the character and appearance of the area**; and

Uses materials of quality appropriate to the nature of the development, the site and its surroundings

g. preserve or enhance the special character and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas"

5.3.4. POLICY HE3 listed buildings and their setting

Planning permission will be granted for the re-use of redundant or unused listed buildings for new purposes compatible with their character, architectural integrity and setting.

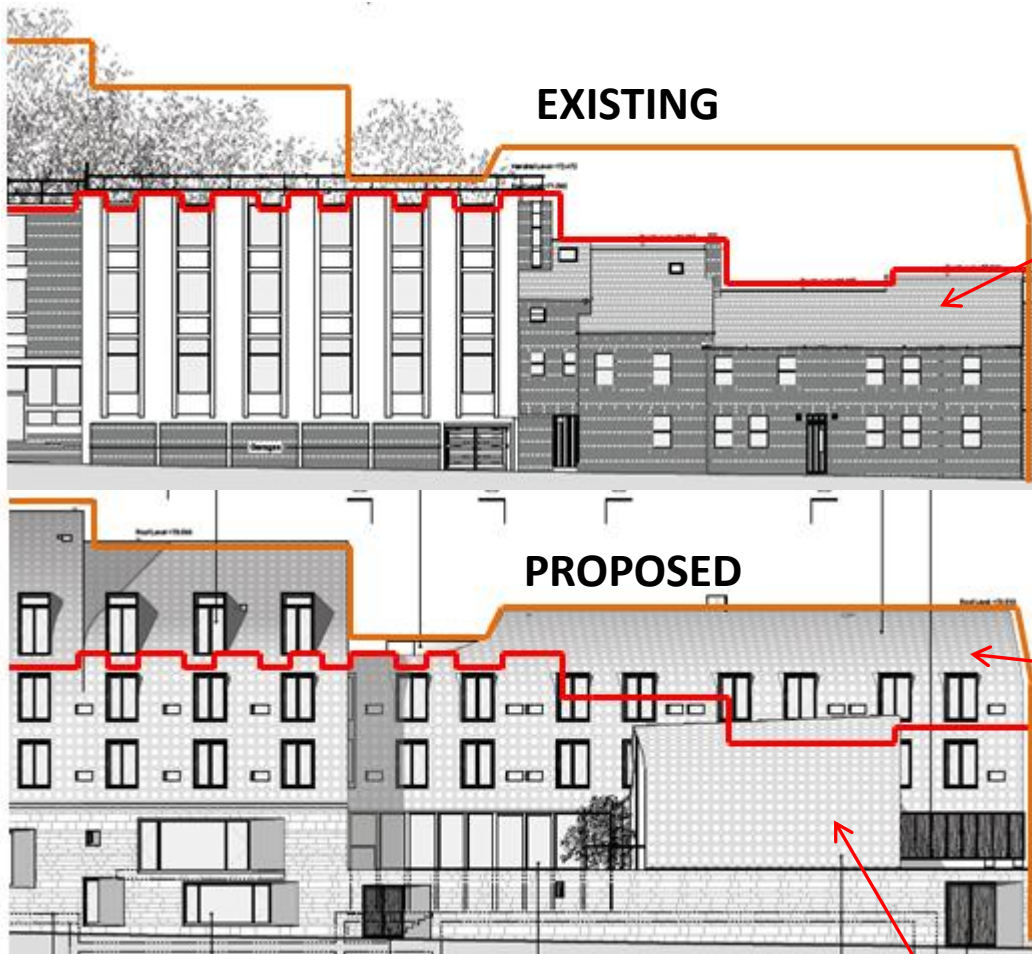
➤ **Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving demolition of a statutory listed building.**

➤ Planning permission will only be granted for works involving an alteration or extension to a listed building that is sympathetic to and respects its history, character and setting.

➤ **Planning permission will only be granted for development which is appropriate in terms of its scale and location** and which uses materials and colours that respect the character of the surroundings and have due regard to the setting of any listed building

1. Historic planning permission and Local Plan considerations continued

Appropriate scale and location, relationship with neighbouring property and in keeping with the character of the area?



1980s design required further permission and approval by the Local Planning Authority “In the interest of visual amenity”

Very significant extra height which is imposing regardless of the fact it is set back

Key

Orange line = height of proposed Exeter building
Red line = height of existing Ruskin building

Functional appearance of lecture hall demonstrates the change of purpose of the proposed building.

This proposal should be rejected because it fails to:

“achieve a proper relationship with neighbouring property and development in keeping with the character of the area.” as required by 1982 planning permission

be “appropriate in terms of its scale and location” as required by the local plan

2. Residential use extended to commercial business

Extract from email dated September 25th 2013 from Chris Pattison, Turnberry

“Dear Mr Johnson,

The Rector has asked me to respond on behalf of the College. I can confirm the following:

.... **The College already has an established educational business** which operates outside term time and **will be extended to the Walton Street site**. Visiting students, academics and conference delegates attend serious academic events and summer schools which are scrupulously managed by the University’s Department of Continuing Education, the College, or other independent research institutions. All the College’s conferences and educational events are supervised and managed by the Stewards office and course tutors or conference organisers **to provide the high levels of service which fee-paying delegates expect**. The Junior Dean and other College officers are responsible for the discipline and welfare of the College’s own students during term-time, but not for conference delegates, who are themselves responsible, diligent adults. If on occasion the College is hosting school-age delegates for an access programme or similar, the delegates will of necessity be closely supervised by their own teachers throughout and the ratio of responsible adults to pupils is high.”

Extract from the Application Form dated 12th April 2013. Source: Oxford City Planning Website

Use class/type of use	Not applicable	Existing gross internal floorspace (square metres)	Gross internal floorspace to be lost by change of use or demolition (square metres)	Total gross internal floorspace proposed (including change of use)(square metres)	Net additional gross internal floorspace following development (square metres)
C1	<input type="checkbox"/>	1068	1068	1412	344
D1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2608	2608	3706	1098
Total		3,676	3,676	5118	1442

39% overall increase in floorspace, most of which is for non-residential purposes, indicates **significant extension of facilities** to enable business purposes (as described in the email above)

We object to the extent of change of use from residential to include business, including conferences. It is not acceptable to assume that business activities can be extended to this site.

This overdevelopment has caused the 20 cycle stand spaces, required by the local plan, to be sited on the highway in a narrow residential street.

3. Public Benefits of the proposal exclude local residents

Extract from the 73 page document : "13_00832_FUL-ADDENDUM_PLANNING_STATEMENT-1417002" dated October 2013.

Source: Turnberry Planning and Alison Brooks Architects Ltd

Summary of Process

1.0

Summary and conclusion

In summary, the proposals will deliver the following public benefits:

- contribute to providing modern, accessible student accommodation in proximity to teaching locations;
- relieve the pressure on the Turl Street Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings to provide additional teaching and social accommodation;
- deliver modern and fully accessible student accommodation and teaching facilities
- maintain the presence of Ruskin College at Walton Street;
- retain the sense of the existing plan in terms of the uses, spatial organisation of the building and relationship to the architecture of the retained facades;
- secure a longterm, viable use for the listed building;
- improve the setting of the building and streetscape through public realm improvements;
- deliver a space which will be available for use by the public; and
- protect and preserve the College's rare books and special collections, ensuring their longterm availability to visiting scholars

In conclusion therefore, it is considered that the alterations to the Ruskin Building will amount to 'less than substantial' harm and are outweighed by the public benefits accruing from the proposals.

The SouthJRA is surprised and disappointed that the 73 page document published last month, by the consultants and architects of this proposal, omitted to make any mention whatsoever about the considerations of local residents in respect of public benefits.

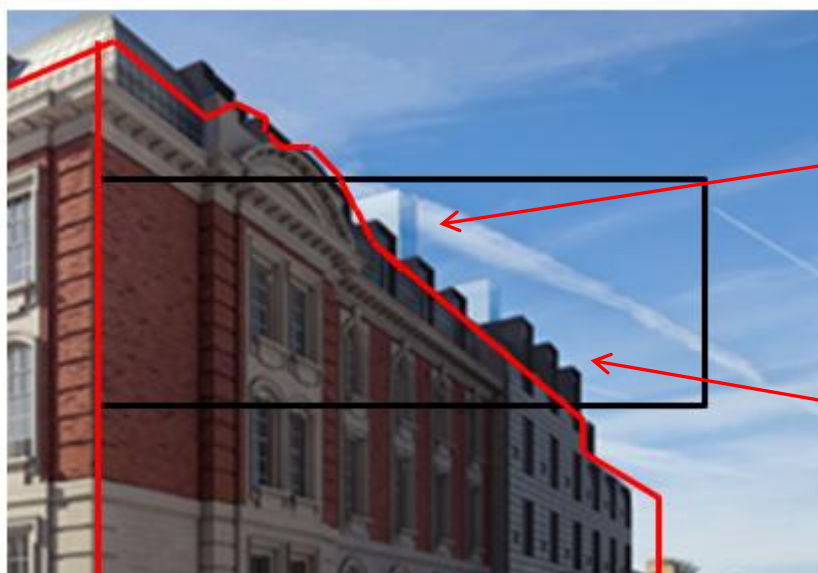
4. Overbearing scale and design

EXISTING



The existing
roofline is
**already
extremely high**

PROPOSED



Very large and
high glass
dormer windows
that **would look
like small
skyscrapers**

These three
dormer windows
**were reduced in
July 2013 but are
still overbearing**

Key

Orange line = height of proposed Exeter building

Red line = height of existing Ruskin building

We object to the overbearing and intrusive extensions to the roof height. The dormer windows are unsightly.

We have seen no proof that the new building will not exceed the 45 degree angle as defined by the Oxford Local Plan.

4. Overbearing scale and design continued

Significant extra height to the roof.

EXISTING



PROPOSED



Key

Orange line = height of proposed Exeter building
Red line = height of existing Ruskin building

We object to the significant extra height that would be added

5. SouthJRA letter published in The Oxford Times

OXFORD TIMES 26TH SEPTEMBER 2013

Councillor's claim was not true and unfair

Sir – Oxford Civic Society's work for better transport in Oxford is both visionary and realistic. Councillor Nimmo-Smith's claim (*Report*, September 19) that "All they [are] interested in is moving the station... to Oxpens" is untrue and unfair.

OCS, like Bus Users Oxford, strongly criticises the county council's destructive ambition to make cross-city bus connections even worse if the Westgate Centre were redeveloped. The convenor of OCS's Transport Group wants Oxford's busiest bus routes upgraded to tramways.

OCS, Thames Valley Railfuture and other local groups are united in seeking a new mass transit service (possibly tram-trains) to Witney and Carterton. And OCS wants planning of property development and transport to be better integrated.

A fault of two-tier local government is that responsibilities for development and transport are at different levels.

District councils plan developments with too little regard for viable public transport access, vide the anti-bus road layout that Vale of White Horse plans for the westward extension of Grove.

County councils make local public transport policy, but have little power to stop a district council bent on unsustainable development, vide Oxford City Council's plan for a Northern Gateway that would gridlock the A40 and A44.

Although county and unitary councils are charged with transport policy, HM Treasury generally denies them enough capital to develop mass transit systems. As a result, the UK lags far behind other European and developed east Asian countries in building tram or tram-train routes.

John Clark asks "Where in Oxford could we develop a good tram system?" and "Where could the... station be re-sited?"

Rightly or wrongly, OCS has consistently advocated Oxpens as the answer to the latter question. As for trams, they would fit our city centre and main roads to Barton and Kidlington. Cowley Road is narrower, more congested and would be more difficult, but still possible.

Hugh Jaeger
Bus Users UK Oxford Group

Wowed by Westgate

Sir – In the wake of Oxford Civic Society Peter Thompson's comments (*Report*, September 19), a modest proposal: Oxford's two universities should sell up and move to a futuristic university super-campus on Salisbury Plain.

To achieve this Oxford University and its colleges could be sold to Disney to become Walt's Oxford Wonderland (WOW) with, for example, the Codrington Library at All Souls serving as Old Walt's den.

As for the rest of Oxfordshire, all hub industries and research institutes could also move to Wiltshire and Oxfordshire would then become a service area for WOW.

Nonsense, of course, but no more nonsense than so much that is being planned for Oxford and its environs, the biggest and most dangerous of which being the plans for Oxford's West End, otherwise known as the parishes of St Ebbe's and St Thomas's, with a refurbished Westgate-in-prospect touted as "a world standard" shopping experience, ie

increased air pollution in a low-lying central area which Oxford City Council acknowledges is already blighted by dangerous levels of oxides of nitrogen. Our children and our children's children deserve better!

Why not go instead for urban village clusters, housing set up around small-scale local shops and workshops, some of the housing by covenant to be car-free? This would go some way to reclaiming St Ebbe's and St Thomas's as residential areas and get away from John Lewis superstores and all the grotesque paraphernalia which goes with "super-shopping".

Such alternative plans won't be considered and it's highly likely that in 40 years Westgate Mark II will have to be knocked down. What a jolly merry-go-round.

Bruce Ross-Smith
Headington

Alien presence

Sir – The 'monstrous' Soldiers of Oxfordshire museum development in Woodstock (*First Person*, September 19) is our very own Port Meadow.

Residents of our beautifully preserved town are now seeing just how poorly the new building fits in with its neighbours.

It appears that Oxfordshire County Council is unaware of the Government guidelines that planning applications within



'Monstrous': The Woodstock development

a conservation area must be "sympathetic to the existing environment" and "must make a positive contribution to the character of the area".

If any private individual had attempted to build a new house in such an alien style on this site the application would rightly have been thrown out.

But Oxfordshire County Council gave itself planning permission and generations to come must suffer the consequences.

Historic local houses are overshadowed by this alien presence, the view from Old Woodstock of the church and town is spoiled. And no one from the council comes to see the damage they have wrought.

The entire county council planning committee should now visit the site and come up with ways to disguise the worst of the building's excesses.

Christine Lea
Woodstock

Planning precedent

Sir – Does planning policy apply to the University and colleges?

We pose this question in relation to the

Readers' letters from previous

application by Exeter College to redevelop the Ruskin College Walton Street site.

As residents in this conservation area we are disappointed that this application, adjourned by the west area planning committee on September 10 because of legal objections, continues to be supported by council officers. This is despite English Heritage having raised significant objections that have not been addressed properly, even though the law requires proper reasons to be given.

We welcome the redevelopment of the Ruskin building; our concern is that the planning process has been less than thorough. Non-verified views supplied by Exeter's planning consultant, Turnberry, and their architects were used in the council presentation and we have been refused access to the 3D data to allow independent checks of the scale, height and light angles.

We have uncovered large and very high glass dormer windows in the plans that would be unsightly and overbearing and a large roof terrace which would directly overlook our houses. The appearance of the proposed building is that of the fuselage of a large aircraft enclosed at one end by the elevations of the original 1913 building.

The intensive development of the site means that there is no room for all the prescribed number of cycle stands which would now be situated on the highway. Thus a precedent would be set for conversion of highway when sites are overdeveloped.

As local residents, we have been unable to get meaningful responses to these significant points and appeal to the committee to reject these plans. If this application were submitted by a private developer, it is inconceivable it would be approved.

Chris Johnson
Chairman, South Jericho Residents' Association

Professor Victor Flynn
Mark Johnson-Watts
Mary Keen
Mary and Stuart Lewis
Nicky Schlatter

Making a stand

Sir – John Simms (*Letters*, September 19) has spoken for the wider community by charging the university with the ultimate responsibility for the current series of building projects which threaten the harmony of the urban landscape.

The university authorities seem to be either unwilling or powerless to control the ambitions of rival institutions competing for "iconic" status by exceeding one another in height, dominance and intrusiveness.

The *Oxford Times* can perform a useful service by informing the public of the current state of these various planning applications. Where can a stand still be made?

Martin Murphy
Oxford

Access to register

Sir – George Noble needs to get his facts straight re access to the electoral register (*Letters*, September 19). The full version of the Register of Electors may be looked at by anyone under supervision.

It is a legal requirement for such access to be under supervision, not something dreamt up by some 'jobsworth' in SODC or anywhere else. The reason for this is that the purpose of the Register is to determine who may vote