

OXFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Patrons: Charles and Angela Cottrell-Dormer, Lord and Lady Saye and Sele, Lady Camoys, Professor Liam Dolan

9 September 2013

Dear Nick Worlledge

Application by Exeter College re Old Ruskin Hall building, Walton Street

Ref: E/13/00832 FUL, as amended

You have asked us to comment on this application, which relates to its impact on the next door property, Worcester College- the garden of which is on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest at Grade II*. Most of the development which concerns OGT is about the roof-line in this part of the new build, and the impact the new buildings will have on those parts of Worcester College garden next to the site.

It appears that a covenant has up to now restricted the height of the buildings along Worcester Place, especially in order to maintain the historically important visual contact between the Radcliffe Observatory and the Provost's Lodging at Worcester College. This has had the effect of keeping a clear space just west of the old Ruskin building. The application proposes to fill this in part with a 4-storey extension.

OGT are concerned that the new build proposals would have the effect of extending the high roof line of the existing Listed building, and would considerably alter the general aspect of this building looking outward from the northern part of the Worcester College garden. Because of its location and bulk this will adversely impact on Worcester College's next-door buildings: Ruskin Lane Building, No 10 Worcester Place, the new accommodation block and its newly designed courtyard garden, and to a lesser extent on the old orchard. The effect would be to block out some of the light creating a shadow across the courtyards of these buildings from east. It is difficult to assess the full extent of the likely changes, and there may be some aesthetic improvements to this outward view, as well as the adverse restriction of light, as noted.

This northern part of the Worcester College garden comprising the old orchard, stone wall, and line of mature Holm oaks (*Quercus ilex*) in front of the 1913 building contribute significantly to the established character and appearance of that part of the registered garden. As suggested above, the perimeter walks, informal lawns, orchard and service buildings lying along the north boundary with Ruskin Lane would be affected to some extent, and although they may be thought to be of lesser significance than the main College gardens centred on the main Quad, south lawn and lake, this north west section of the registered garden is worthy of every effort to retain its special quality and features, including views inwards and outwards.

We are pleased to see that the building could have a new use for Exeter College students, but the application should not be granted in its present form.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Matthews (Secretary of OGT)
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