

WATKINS Alice

From: WATKINS Alice
Sent: 10 June 2013 14:11
To: planningcomments@oxford.gov.uk
Subject: FW: Former Ruskin College site, Walton Street, Oxford-13/01075/LBD

Posted At: 10 June 2013 13:14

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Conversation: Former Ruskin College site, Walton Street, Oxford-13/01075/LBD

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Dear Mr. Crofton-Briggs,

Former Ruskin College site, Walton Street, Oxford-13/01075/LBD

Thank you for consulting the Georgian Group on the above application affecting a Grade II listed building, a Conservation Area and the setting of a Grade II* Registered Landscape at Worcester College.

The Group discussed this application at our Casework Panel. The Group wishes to object to the granting of consent and I now write to you with our advice:

The former Ruskin College was built as a working men's college, designed 1907 by the partnership of Joseph and Smithem, and built 1912-13. Joseph and Smithem were associated with Lord Iveagh's social housing improvements in Dublin, making them a logical choice for the Ruskin College commission. Nathan Solomon Joseph was a noted social reformer in his own right, and was one of the first British commentators to draw attention to the Jewish persecution in Tsarist Russia in the 1890s. While Ruskin College was in execution they also undertook Ada Lewis Women's Lodging House in East London, again in an interpretative 'seventeenth century' idiom. Their work in London and Dublin makes Ruskin College of especial interest as it ties the history of widening education in Oxford to the national philanthropic reforms which so characterised the period immediate to the First World War. Joseph and Smithem also undertook some commercial work in Mayfair in the 1880s, but their design for Ruskin College is among their most competent.

The former Ruskin College is also one of very few pre-c.1950 Oxford buildings to be designed by a Jewish architect, perhaps one of the first since George Basevi's work at Balliol in the 1820s. It is a steel-framed building clad in pinkish-red brick and Bath stone ashlar with a Welsh slate mansard roof. The 1912-13 building is of three storeys plus dormered attic, in a late-C17 style. The building itself lies outside the Georgian Group remit of 1700-1840. However we fully support the Victorian Society's advice in their letter to you regarding this application. Nevertheless the Group notes that the 1912-13 building makes a beneficial contribution to the Conservation Area through its design and materials.

The Panel were concerned by this scheme which they believed would have a harmful impact upon the character of this highly important Conservation Area and upon the buildings and designed landscapes within it. The proposed alterations to the former Ruskin College would have a detrimental impact on parts of the early nineteenth century planned landscape at Worcester adjacent to the former Ruskin College site. This landscape was largely laid out in the early nineteenth century and is registered at Grade II*. While the late twentieth century additions to the Ruskin building do not enhance the Conservation Area or the views northward from Worcester, their proposed replacement is greater in scale and would use a palette of

materials alien to the Conservation Area. The proposed stainless steel roof is of especial concern in this regard. The Group must advise that the scale and design of the proposed new building is revised.

Should you wish to further discuss these proposals or this application please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

David McKinstry



**THE
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GROUP**

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