

Dear Mr Griffin,

We are writing on behalf of SEFRG (South East Fallowfield Residents' Group). The group was formed approximately 25 years ago and almost all of us live in the M14 6 postcode area - which is the same postcode as the USDAW site. Our group usually has quarterly (minuted) meetings however since the pandemic this has not been possible. That said, we have discussed this application over a number of weeks via our very lively Whatsapp group, a well attended Zoom meeting hosted by our ward councillors and, of course, we have continued to be in regular contact with email updates, exchanges and phone calls. We are therefore certain that the views expressed here fairly represent our group. We are not outliers.

Firstly we would like to say that we fully endorse the comments submitted by [REDACTED] of the Rusholme and Fallowfield Civic Society and these have been distributed to the group via email. As a highly experienced architect with detailed knowledge of Planning Law, Peter has been able to deal very fully with this application and particularly the technical aspects of it. Thanks to Peter's report, we therefore hope to concentrate our efforts on the main concerns that members of our group have surrounding this application and perhaps raise one or two additional points that may not have been mentioned elsewhere. **We request that you read our comments in the context of the evidence produced by Fallowfield Community Guardians (With particular regard to the data about student density and associated problems associated)**

The purpose of this objection is not therefore to reiterate everything in Peter's report, or groups like Friends of Platt Fields who we know have particular knowledge and expertise about the (very real) harm to the park, but to highlight our primary issue with this application which relates to the harm this new student development will cause to our, already fragile, community.

Although Fallowfield has been popular with students since Victorian times, the level of student density in the last 20 odd years has **dramatically** increased and we now have a situation where 64% of the local population are students in M14 6/M14 7 postcode and our neighbourhood has become highly unbalanced. We would like to emphasise at this point that **we are not anti students per se** (many of us have been students ourselves and many of us have children who have been/are/will be students). We know that a neighbourhood involving a certain proportion of students can bring great benefits in terms of diversity and vibrancy but it is the sheer volume of students in our area which is causing the problems.

Our objections will focus on the following:

- 1) Reasons why this development will harm Fallowfield
- 2) The direct effect of this development on Langley Road, Mabfield Road and the Brow generally
- 3) Comment on the Commercial Market Assessment Report by Edwards & Co
- 4) Conclusion

1) Reasons why this development will harm our community.

The applicants paint the picture of a well managed student development which *won't* cause any problems to the community but *will* enhance Oakley Villa and add economic

benefits to the local economy. They further contend that the 425 students in the development will result in 425 bed vacant bed spaces in HMOs in Fallowfield which will then lead to 100 houses being freed up for families. This influx of families will also bring huge benefits to the local economy by spending locally and paying council tax.

It certainly sounds like a win:win situation however **we firmly believe that these assertions are based on the following flawed assumptions and data:**

a) That students in Fallowfield are only living in HMOs because they either can't afford to live in PBSAs, or because of a lack of supply.

This is not the case. **Many UK students actually choose to live in HMOs because it fits their idea of student life.** PBSAs are seen as something you do in your first year because you are in an unfamiliar place and you want to meet loads of new people. In any event, the price point of £160pw is still more expensive than almost all the HMOs in this area (we refer to Community Guardians' data on this)

It is not common for UK students to spend their whole degree course in PBSA. **Once students move into our area (either in the first or second years) a significant number will continue to stay here** and move into the local HMOs in subsequent years. Thus, **by year 3 we are highly likely to end up with a net increase of significantly more than the initial 425 students.** We can see this at Owens Park. As the numbers living in Owens Park have risen, so too, have the numbers in HMOs because many choose to stay in Fallowfield for the duration. There are circa 3000 plus now on the OP campus and 8000 plus in HMOs.

b) The applicants' planning application states that because an average HMO in Fallowfield housed 4.1 students in 2011 this will mean that 100 houses will be freed up for local families.

This assumes that every student moving into this new development will free a room in an HMO and that no other students will move into the area in their stead! The two universities alone have circa 75000 people and living in an HMO in Fallowfield has taken on an almost legendary status. As the applicants' themselves point out, demand for accommodation in Fallowfield is very high and if there's spare capacity, some, if not all of it, will be filled. Therefore, **without specific action by the council (or the universities) to buy up HMOs and sell or rent to families, there will not be any meaningful reduction in HMOs and we will see a net increase in the number of students in our area.** As we have already said, Fallowfield is now so unbalanced that **any increase at all would not be acceptable. In fact only a decrease in overall numbers will start to create the 'balanced' community we need**

SEFRG attended a meeting with Watkin Jones during the consultation period and at that meeting David Neesham raised this issue with Barry Coltrini (Watkin Jones - Development Director),] and even he admitted - and he was clearly putting a positive spin on it - that 'it's not going to take out all the HMOs' but that he thought it would release 'some'

Further, the figures quoted from the 2011 census are extremely out of date.

Government policy with regard to permitted development means that significant numbers of HMOs in Fallowfield have been enlarged to accommodate yet more students and whilst, in many ways we welcomed the Article 4 direction (introduced in 2011) this has also led to

landlords further intensifying their existing housing stock. For example, we have seen many houses which were originally 4 bed roomed turned into 8/10 bedroom HMOs. Cllr Rebecca Moore organised a meeting on 9th November 2018 between SEFRG and council officers in the Licensing and Planning department, including Julie Roscoe. At the meeting we produced evidence to show just how widespread these problems are (we can supply this evidence again, if needed)

So what this really means is that, even if all the students were persuaded to move into this student development, as opposed to living in HMOs (which obviously won't happen) and even if, no other students replaced them (which, again, won't happen), it would possibly only lead to a reduction of 53 x 8 bedroom HMOs scattered throughout the area. In return we would have a monstrous tower block plus 4/5 storey building looming over the park and completely dwarfing Oakley Villa with big signage along Wilmslow Road advertising yet another student PBSA. It would also condemn the houses in the immediate area to permanent HMO-dom

c) The applicants then assume that all these apparently empty HMOs will automatically turn back into family houses. In reality would this happen?

Again, this is highly unlikely. Since the advent of Airbnb, we have found a lot of landlords turning student houses into airbnbs because the yield is sometimes higher than with student occupation. Airbnbs cause many of the same problems as HMOs and go no way towards redressing the imbalance in our community. Landlords who buy up in our area have no interest in our community and are simply looking for the next 'big buck' whether it be Airbnb, social housing or housing the homeless, they are on to it.

*Contrary to council policy SP1
Contrary to council policy H11*

d) The assumption that students living in PBSAs will not cause a problem to the community.

Students living in PBSAs obviously live in the community too and indeed the developers will be selling Fallowfield (and the student image of Fallowfield) to their prospective customers. If this was not the case, why would they be so keen on this particular site. This means that an extra 425 young people will be regularly socialising in the area. The bars and takeaways have extremely late licensing hours in our area - many are open until 2/3am, 7 nights a week and some are open much later (There were 38 licensed premises in the district centre at our last count October 2020). This causes untold misery to local people. The lethal cocktail of very late licenses and 11000 young people in a very small area means that local residents already have their sleep disturbed. We witness all kinds of ASB; public urination (sometimes even defecation) vomit, littering, substance abuse etc are all common occurrences and, the students themselves are often easy prey for criminals. (We refer to data provided by the Community Guardians) They will also be visiting friends' house parties, hosting parties/gatherings on site and in Platt Fields Park too. The fact that this particular student development has very limited social space (inside and out) and there is no on-site bar or refreshment only exacerbates the problems. At this point, it's also worth mentioning that the internal courtyard in the development will be very shaded indeed. We notice that photos on the planning application show students apparently enjoying the sun but there are tall buildings (including a 13 storey tower) on all

sides of the courtyard so we're sure that it will be almost permanently shaded. This will mean that large numbers of students will almost certainly decamp to the adjoining park on sunny days

Contrary to council policy H12

- e) [There is assumption that PBSAs are well managed - or that it is even possible to manage behaviour](#)

The spotlight on local student halls during the pandemic has shown that, **even with heavy security and on university land, it isn't always possible to control behaviour on site when large numbers are involved.** (see evidence in the Community Guardian's objection) This is something that local people have always been aware of but now that this type of partying is breaking the law, it has gained more publicity.

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-55130415#:~:text=Students%20trying%20to%20escape%20a,02%3A00%20GMT%20on%20Saturday.)

[manchester-55130415#:~:text=Students%20trying%20to%20escape%20a,02%3A00%20GMT%20on%20Saturday.](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-55130415#:~:text=Students%20trying%20to%20escape%20a,02%3A00%20GMT%20on%20Saturday.)

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/manchester-students-partying-early-hours-19018870>

A quick google of Fresh - **Watkin Jones' management arm - suggests that many student residents are unhappy with their management** - one reviewer claimed that the management office 'had no knowledge or information of what was happening in the accommodation during night times when **people were throwing parties in the student lounge' and this has been happening during the pandemic.** Of the 12 reviews 92% gave just 1 star (bad) and 8% gave 3 stars (average)

<https://uk.trustpilot.com/review/freshstudentliving.co.uk>

Contrary to council policy H12

- f) [There is an assumption that all student spending in the local economy is to be welcomed and does not have a negative impact on the high street or the local economy.](#)

The 'high street' offering on Wilmslow Road is extremely poor in terms of both the quality and the variety of retail options; there are a proliferation of **poor quality takeaways, bars, clubs and letting agents many of which have been linked to illegal activities.** These establishments are 'fed' by the student pound and the more students we have, the more they will thrive. This, in turn, **really affects local residents' lives - we feel increasingly alienated on our local high street.** It is not normal for people in their 50s to be asked for their ID when they go for a drink in a bar, or for a local person in their early 20s to be told they cannot enter a bar if they're not a student, but this happens in Fallowfield! Moreover in the summer months, when the students leave, many local places actually shut shop. **During the holiday periods, the area resembles a forlorn, out of season, seaside resort...but without the sea!**

The number of licensed premises (most with very late terminal hours) has also led to huge spikes in crime and ASB which are well documented by the council and the reason why Fallowfield district centre is a Cumulative Impact Policy area. It is the *only* Cumulative Impact Policy in Manchester. **In addition, there are the clear up costs associated with trying to manage these premises. The economic impact section of**

this planning application has not factored in these costs at all but merely highlights the **perceived** positives. The report estimates *'that the (new) occupants of 100 (family) homes **could** generate total household retail and leisure expenditure of circa £1.7 million per annum, contributing to sustaining local shops and businesses and the employment they support.*

Although they 'could' generate this expenditure, we believe this is highly unlikely unless and until we have a more balanced neighbourhood. Why? Because there is **very little on our 'high street' to attract long term residents and the high street offering is not meant for us. Many long term residents do not shop or socialise locally.**

Adding a further 425 students in this development will only lead to further degradation. This comes at a time (following the pandemic) when we were hopeful that some of the newly vacant shops might change.

Contrary to council policy H12

Contrary to council policy SP1



Examples of the poor and limited retail offering which is largely aimed at the student market

2) The direct harm this development will cause to Langley Road and the roads nearby

As you can see from the photo below. Langley Road is a pleasant line of Victorian terraced houses which are just on the edge of Platt Fields Park.



Langley Road

a) Loss of sunlight and visual amenity

Some (but not all) of the residents in these houses currently have a view of the 2 storey 1930s extension to Oakley Villa. The new development will, by contrast, be 2/3 storeys taller and run the entire length of the street. This will make Langley Road quite oppressive and gloomy. The sunlight reports in the planning application (which only talk about the effects inside the houses), mention the fact that there will be **a reduction in sunlight to the terrace but state that this is within 'acceptable' limits when there is 'an efficient use of land'**. **We are not clear what the definition of 'an efficient use of land' is but we are quite certain that this will harm the residents' enjoyment of their houses. Langley Road and half of Mabfield Road will be blighted by a huge 13 storey tower and a large L-shaped wrap around building in what is, a residential neighbourhood.** This is entirely out of context and although the developer points to the Owens Park Tower building as setting a precedent we would like to point out that this is redundant and scheduled for demolition. Local people do not want to get rid of one tower, only to be lumbered with another one which is actually set within a residential community and adjoining a public park. We note that all the images presented of the new development on Langley Road are either looking up or down the road but do not show the outlook from the actual houses and so are quite misleading - The street is actually quite narrow.

Contrary to council policy DM1

Contrary to council policy EN2

b) Light Pollution

There will be 56 large windows on the new building on Langley Road. (This number of large windows is obviously needed because there will be very light from the other side of the building). On the plans we can see that these are student bedrooms so it is very likely that the lights will be on for many hours, especially because students do tend to burn the midnight oil. . Furthermore we can see from the images in the planning application that approximately 7 storeys of the tower building will loom above the lower building, so the residents will see a further 98 windows and, again, these are student bedrooms.

There will therefore be a combined total of 154 windows overlooking this small terrace, where there are currently 35 windows of varying sides on the old USDAW 1930s extension. This will obviously adversely affect the residents on Langley Road and will be especially disruptive at night when they are trying to sleep.

Contrary to council policy DM1

c) Lack of Privacy

There will be **154 windows overlooking this small terrace** which we believe is completely unacceptable and quite intolerable

Contrary to council policy DM1

d) Car parking

3 disabled bays, 4 charging points and 1 'standard' parking bay. This is totally inadequate and we know, from experience that a lot of students (especially 2nd and 3rd years) bring their cars to university. They don't tend to use them much because of the very frequent bus services so they are left parked on residential streets for days on end. **This lack of parking will severely impact on local residents many of whom already struggle to park because of the numbers of student households in the area. Moreover the applicants car parking 'solution' to the beginning and end of year pick-ups and drops-offs is derisory; allocating a few extra spaces and 20 minute time slots with marshalls to supervise! How will this work? Parents will be queuing all around the residential streets and possibly even on Wilmslow Road, it will cause major disruption and really affect local residents and possibly even the wider traffic flow.** Again large lorries during the lengthy construction process will cause major disruption

Contrary to council policy DM1

Contrary to council policy T2

e) Noise

425 extra students walking to and from the development at all times of night and day. Students tend to go out in groups and are quite often blissfully unaware of their surroundings, especially when they have been drinking etc. **We cannot overstate the effect of this on the wellbeing of local residents - to be woken up night after night is extremely debilitating and it is becoming increasingly clear that sleep disruption can lead to various health problems** including, mental health problems, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attacks, strokes and dementia.

In the summer months, students will often have their **windows open for ventilation and this will mean that the noise (music, shouting, parties)** will carry even further especially due to the height of the buildings. Residents who live near Owens Park have mentioned the increasing amounts of noise since the building of Unsworth Park and the proximity and sheer density of this development, is bound to have a similar, if not greater, effect.

Contrary to council policy DM1

Contrary to council policy H12

3) Comment on Commercial Market Assessment Report by Edwards & Co

At our meeting with Watkin Jones we were told that because the site isn't particularly attractive to commercial occupiers, then the only option is for it to become student accommodation, or fall into dereliction Basically we were presented with 2 very poor choices in the hope that we would opt for students and not object to their planning application.

The above report by Edwards & Co was commissioned by Watkin Jones to support **their** planning application. Edwards & Co have been asked to focus on the commercial development prospects for this site and so there is very little mention of whether the site

would actually be attractive to residential developers. We believe this is a missed opportunity and that the demand for residential property in South Manchester is strong and that includes Fallowfield.

Alternative uses of the site:

a) Residential development into flats

There are plenty of flats in the immediate vicinity which are largely occupied by long term residents; Appleby Lodge (0.4 miles from Oakley Villa) and Thorne House (0.3 miles from Oakley Villa) are just two examples

On Rightmove we can see;

Appleby Lodge

A 2 bedroom flat at £200,000 and another one at £170,000 - both sold

A 1 bedroom flat at £119,950 - sold

Thorne House

A 2 bedroom flat in Thorne House £180,000 and one at £160,000.

We believe these developments are very fair comparisons to Oakley Villa. They are on the opposite side of the road from Oakley Villa i.e. on the same side as the Owens Park campus but they are only a short walk away.

If Oakley Villa and the surrounding land was sympathetically developed (and not swamped by an enormous tower block and 4/5 storey buildings!). We think this would be very attractive to a variety of purchasers, especially bearing in mind its location, near the park. The development would also have the added advantage of being set around a lovely building - Oakley Villa is in fact 'the last surviving of a number of large 19th Century villas on the Western side of Wilmslow Road'. The villa was built in 1837, the year Queen Victoria came to the throne and pre-dates almost all the buildings in the area.

b) Residential development into houses.

This same developer (Watkin Jones) was refused planning permission for student accommodation c2010 and ended up building a development of family houses in 2013 - this has really helped to restore the balance in our community and many residents on this estate have become very actively involved in our neighbourhood.



Besford Close - A development of family housing in Fallowfield, built by Watkin Jones in 2013

On Rightmove:

A 4 bedroomed family house for £470K - again this is not far from Oakley Villa and it is not in such a nice setting

<https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/77176116#/>

At our meeting with Watkin Jones they also contended that any residential development would inevitably become student accommodation.

Again we disagree with this for the following reasons:

It is possible to attach covenants to new developments - this was done at the Besford Close development built by Watkin Jones.

In the case of flats, conditions can be attached to the leases and even if some parents bought a small flat for their son or daughter, it is very unlikely to lead to the same problems we have with behaviour in large HMOs and Purpose Built Student Accommodation. Furthermore, if the flats were at the luxury end of the market (or affordable living homes) they would not attract the student parent market.

Whilst Fallowfield may not attract the same prices as Didsbury and Chorlton, it is still a very viable location for residential development - it has **excellent links to the city centre, lots of access to green space - Platt Fields and the Fallowfield Loop and there are also some outstanding schools** - it is also a little more affordable for those that cannot stretch to some of the pricier suburbs. This is why people continue to move here (and always will) - the problem we face is trying to keep hold of them!

4) Conclusion

There is absolutely no doubt in our minds that the current proposal will cause significant damage to our community. For the people who live on the roads around the site, life will become intolerable and they will be driven out, creating even more HMOs. For the wider community it will mean living with an additional 425 plus students (and as we have already mentioned, we believe the real increase will be substantially higher because once students move to this area, they often stay). This will lead to more rubbish, ASB, crime, pressure on our local infrastructure (e.g. buses, doctors etc) and a further degradation of our neighbourhood. In addition our park will have a huge tower looming over it and one of our last remaining Victorian villas will be completely swamped by this massive over-development. Fallowfield (which incidentally currently has no sign) will only be marked by huge student accommodation signage on both sides of Wilmslow Road. It will send out a clear message to all and sundry that Fallowfield = students and residents are really not welcome. This type of development is not appropriate here, or in any suburban setting (*policy H12*)

However, the alternative could be fantastic for our community and lead to a positive ripple effect

If the Oakley Villa site was turned into a really attractive residential development it really could have a major impact on our area. Certainly Langley Road, Mabfield (and Albion Road too) could begin to revert back to family houses. Currently only 4 houses on Langley are licensed HMOs so, although most of them are currently rented out to students, landlords may well sell them if the general environment improves and they can get a good price.

Mabfield Road is particularly desirable because it directly overlooks the park and a lot of the houses are very attractive with plenty of original features. **One of the residents on Mabfield (a young man in his late 20s early 30s) told us that he bought his house a few years ago and loves it, he has restored it beautifully and, but for the problems caused by student neighbours, he says it's idyllic especially with the views over the park**



Mabfield Road with the park directly opposite



View from Mabfield Road towards the USDAW site. The new tower will be much closer than the Owens Park tower shown in the distance.



The little fresh food market in the park (run by MUD) has just opened and is less than a minute's walk from Mabfield, Albion and Langley Road, it's open from Thursday to Sunday selling fresh bread, cakes etc as well as organic veg. It is also very close to the Fallowfield Loop and a short bike ride away from Levenshulme and Chorlton. This could be the beginnings of a real change in the area, perhaps in a similar way to what we have recently seen in Levenshulme... and it would be people-led.

We understand that USDAW are very keen to leave a positive legacy and we believe this is perfectly possible whilst ensuring a good price for their site - it might not be the highest price - but the only way of achieving that is to over-develop the land and ruin the very heritage asset that they would like to protect. If our area was more balanced, we would restore harmony - and empathy - between students and local residents. Surely this is a great aspiration for a trade union.

We urge you to reject this planning application in full.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Chair, South East Fallowfield Residents' Group (SEFRG)

Postscript comment on the Consultation Process

Finally we would like to make a comment about the consultation process.

The applicants informed us that they had delivered over 5000+ leaflets but we hardly know anyone who has received one, even people who live within a few minute's walk have said they haven't received one. By contrast, Lidl are planning to build a new store on Fallowfield Retail Park - this building is further away from most of us, than Oakley Villa and yet we have received extensive information about it. Is it possible to have a list of all the streets and apartment blocks where these leaflets were delivered?

The applicants point to the fact that they have used social media to advertise but many people (especially older people) do not use social media.

We note they advertised in the MEN (we didn't see the advert ourselves) but we expect some may have seen that but none of the other publications they mentioned are likely to have been seen by local residents e.g. The Mancunion

Bearing in mind the pandemic which means it's particularly hard for local residents groups to reach out to people and the fact that this application was made on 23rd December, we are quite sure that many people remain unaware of this application and will be shocked by it.