

Comments for Planning Application 129020/FO/2020

Application Summary

Application Number: 129020/FO/2020

Address: Oakley 188 Wilmslow Road Manchester M14 6LJ

Proposal: Erection of 1 no. 13 storey building and 1 no. part 4 and part 5 storey building to form purpose built student accommodation together with a single storey side and rear extension to the retained and refurbished Oakley Villa and conversion to form amenity and communal space together with associated landscaping, cycle parking, car parking and associated works following the demolition of existing office accommodation on the site

Case Officer: Robert Griffin

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Oakley House Planning Application for 425 students: Planning application 129020/FO/2020.

I wholeheartedly and vehemently object to this application. I grew up in Fallowfield and I love it deeply for its vibrant and diverse community - the local residents and the students who respect the community and are invested in its growth and development. I feel incredibly proud and lucky to have grown up here, on Beech Grove, where my grandparents bought their house nearly fifty years ago - a house they cherished and worked hard for and in which they raised their four children and three grandchildren (my two uncles and mum still live on Beech Grove. I am almost 40 years old, and the Fallowfield we shared with students whilst I was growing up, was a very different one. My whole life was spent in Fallowfield until I left to go to university - I went to Princess Christian College nursery and then Manchester High School for Girls. Platt Fields Park was my favourite place to go and feed the ducks. I became who I am here.

I am so deeply saddened by what has happened here over the last twenty years, that I cannot hold back the tears whilst I type this.

I have lived in London for twenty years, and come back at least once a month and definitely every holiday (Eid, Christmas and Easter etc.) to be with my family. Over the years I have seen a very sad change to the area, and since I have been back to support my family through COVID and lockdown (I've been back since March 2020), I am truly horrified to see what has happened here

and the sheer injustice of the situation for residents, many of whom have lived here for decades, built their homes and raised their families here. If the community is suffering like this during a pandemic, I dread to think what it is like normally.

It is clear to see that in the last twenty years the gap between students and local residents has widened - I believe 64% of the population is students in M14 6. This clearly causes problems in the neighbourhood such as ASB, graffiti, street noise and other noise (especially for those living next door to an hmo), drug dealing, litter and lack of parking to name but a few. I believe that adding another 425 students to the area, who will then move out of halls after a year in student accommodation, into the local area where people like my family and friends live, will only add to these problems. The disparity caused by the saturation of Fallowfield with students has meant that many people I grew up with have moved out of the area. I know countless people (including my family who have and still do) feel as though they have been pushed out by the growing number of students due to their anti-social behaviour and lack of respect for the neighbourhood and the people who live in it permanently. Sadly, a number of students see Fallowfield as a temporary playground and exude a sense of entitlement because they pay fees. They treat Fallowfield as though it is a part of the campus, which it certainly is not. Many people I know have been made to feel like pariahs in their own community and prisoners in their own homes - I know full well from my family's and especially my mother's experience in the past ten to fifteen years, that they have been made to feel this way, as they have been told on numerous occasions by students that they should move out of Fallowfield as they believe it is a student area. Big groups of students walking through the streets can be highly intimidating, especially as they treat the neighbourhood as if it belongs to them. This has been aggravated as the numbers have grown over the years. This is NOT a student area. This is a community that they are very welcome to be a part of but there is a clear divide, created by them and exacerbated by the university, who do not seem to take any responsibility for their student's actions. Adding 425 more students to the area will only exacerbate the current unsustainable situation and will cause further imbalance in our community.

There are several reasons I believe this development would not be beneficial for Fallowfield:

- There are already 4000 student spaces in Owen's Park and building this development would mean that this would be like an extra extension of the campus, on both sides of Wilmslow Road, which would send a message to people that this area is all about the students. It is not. There are still some permanent residents who live near the USDAW building, sadly very few, who have owned their homes for decades who feel like they have been invaded by landlords and students. They have made their homes in what are beautiful Victorian houses and feel very isolated and forgotten by the council. There are no more young families living on the brow anymore and the houses which were once very beautiful have been destroyed by landlords wanting to make quick fixes cheaply. It's not too late to fix this. Council Policy SP1 states that planning should create balanced and sustainable neighbourhoods of choice.

- When I was at school, the main strip of shops opposite Owens Park, catered for everyone. Most of the shops I remember have gone, as with the influx of more and more students, they went out of

business and have been replaced by estate agents, off licenses, run down takeaways and a vape shop that sells whipped cream canisters for nitrous oxide! More students in the area will likely to lead to more such businesses opening up like pubs, clubs, takeaways, all of which target the student market not local residents. Whilst most of these are open during term time, they close up during the holidays and Fallowfield becomes a ghost town. It would be more sustainable to have shops that the whole community could use.

- There is a huge litter problem near the USDAW building and in the neighbouring streets already. There are not enough bins on the roads round the site now and so the roads and pavements are always littered with fast food containers and household rubbish. This is compounded by the fact that the alleys behind the houses, which hold the industrial bins, are always overflowing and are quite simply disgusting. I have been back every day this week since Saturday 23 January, and they are never clean. The most repulsive thing I saw in several different spots was human faeces. Adding 425 students to this neighbourhood will only make this problem worse.

- The lovely little terraces on Langley Road (some of which have been ruined by landlords) will be utterly swamped by the development. In fact all of the houses that face the park will be blighted by the tall building.

- I believe putting so many young people in such a "bubble" will only lead to more noise issues and anti social behaviour which the council and police are already struggling to control. The pressure will only increase.

- The site is directly next door to a part of Platt Fields Park that is on Wilmslow Road where there are lots of beautiful historic trees that will inevitably be damaged in the process, whether as a direct consequence of the building works or in the long term once it is built. The direct overshadowing, due to the proximity of this part of the park to the development, means other natural habitats and wildlife will be affected. The Shakespearean Garden is a lovely, peaceful, private sanctuary, which will be ruined by the looming building. The park will be the main outdoor space for the students, which will cause increased use of the park and will cause more damage as this would also mean an increase in anti-social behaviour which city is struggling with already.

- The roads are already congested and have been since I was a child. With incredibly limited parking this will put pressure on the surrounding areas and the park. There is already an enormous ugly bus stop at the front of the building, which in more normal times is super crowded, this will only become worse and will impact local residents as they try to go to work, or go shopping or for whatever purposes they would need to use it.

- As the building was built in the 1930s, it has some period features, which it would be a shame to lose. We need to preserve this and redevelop them so the community can enjoy it.

The area has so much potential that we really must do as much as we can to save it. It is baffling

that Watkin Jones and the university think that this development could be beneficial to the local community in any way, considering the ongoing problems we have already, which continue to be rife even during a pandemic. The complete disregard for local residents and this clear greed for profit, over our lives is completely immoral and abhorrent. Our families and friends have been, and are, collateral damage in what is an extraordinarily lucrative business which benefits only a handful of people including private developers and the university with complete disregard for the people in the community.

Finally, Council Policy H12 states that "purpose built student accommodation should be located in the areas immediately adjacent to the core university areas, principally the Oxford Road Corridor area" and somewhere which is within a 20 minute walk so there is no dependence on public transport. This site is clearly outside that area. The Oxford Road corridor stops at Hathersage Road, yet we have been saturated with students increasingly over the years and are now at breaking point. The community needs help to rebuild and not something that will only add to its problems. There has been no thought to the effect this will have on us as we already grapple with effectively living on a "campus" - something which we had absolutely no choice in. We may have the choice to leave but we WILL NOT be bullied out.

I hope that this application is rejected and this beautiful site will be redeveloped to bring the community together, not to compound the ever increasing, disconnect between the local community and students.