

WITHINGTON CIVIC SOCIETY

Application: 129020/FO/2020

Oakley, 188 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield M14 6LJ

425 units of Purpose-built Student Accommodation

Withington Civic Society objects to the above application.

The comments provided below consider the proposed development in the context of the Manchester Core Strategy 2012-2027.

Fallowfield district centre is demonstrably and detrimentally affected by the disproportionate number of students living in the area; circa 50% of the population. For this reason, any efforts to engender a balanced and sustainable community will continue to be frustrated by this development. The existing Owens Park campus houses over 3,000 students. A further 425 student spaces will represent an increase of over 14%, thus further exacerbating the community imbalance that prevails in Fallowfield, and, frustrating any realistic chances of creating a diverse and sustainable neighbourhood/district centre.

The Core Strategy identifies the creation of healthy, thriving neighbourhoods as a key policy objective, however the proposed development conflicts with a significant number Core Strategy aims and policies as set-out below.

Relevant sections of the Core Strategy (not exhaustive) have been reproduced.

Comments by Withington Civic Society are shown in bold.

The reader's attention is particularly drawn to *EN2 - Tall Buildings*.

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Manchester Now

(Fallowfield District Centre) much of its retail and leisure offer has evolved to meeting student needs.

This is recognition that the offer is already skewed towards students.

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Challenges

- Maintain the character and popularity of the southern neighbourhoods.
- Improve standard of living...and reduce levels of deprivation in Chorlton Park, Burnage, Withington and Fallowfield.
- Managing demand for student housing and ensuring that the sustainability and amenity of neighbourhoods are protected.
- Improve under-performing centres.

It is well-known that Fallowfield requires City Council intervention against all of the above.

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4. Core Strategy Vision

By 2027, Manchester will be:

- A City with neighbourhoods where people choose to live all their lives because they offer a wide range of quality housing and an attractive environment where locally distinctive character is conserved and enhanced
- A City with thriving district centres, which have a distinct local character and provide a good range of accessible public services, retail and local facilities

Fallowfield has a disproportionate amount of student accommodation and, as a consequence, a limited retail and leisure offer, whilst also suffering a high incidence of anti-social behaviour, noise and public realm impacts.

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Policy SP 1 - Spatial Objectives

Creation of neighbourhoods of choice, providing high quality and diverse housing around district centres which meet local needs, all in a distinct environment.

An additional 425 student homes will further erode the lack of diversity already present in Fallowfield.

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Policy H1 - Overall Housing Provision

The City Centre is also an appropriate location for purpose-built student accommodation. The need to diversify housing stock in mono-tenure areas by increasing the availability of family housing.

The Policy recognises the city centre as a suitable location for student accommodation and the need to expand the range of housing options in many areas. Fallowfield is over-represented with student accommodation, both purpose-built and shared houses, and has a shortage of affordable family homes.

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Policy H6 - South Manchester

High-density development in South Manchester will generally only be appropriate within the district centres of Chorlton, Didsbury, Fallowfield, Levenshulme, and Withington, as part of mixed-use schemes. Outside the district centres, priorities will be for housing which meets identified shortfalls, including family housing and provision that meets the needs of elderly people, with schemes adding to the stock of affordable housing.

The proposal scheme is not mixed use. The Policy makes clear reference to the need for more family homes, accommodation for the elderly and affordable provision. The application makes no contribution to this state of affairs.

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Policy H12 - Purpose-built student accommodation

The provision of new purpose-built student accommodation will be supported where the development satisfies the criteria below.

-Proposals should not lead to an increase in on-street parking in the surrounding area.

There is no on-site provision for resident parking and this will inevitably surcharge on-street capacity in the surrounding area, thus reducing the amenity of local residents.

-Proposals that can demonstrate a positive regeneration impact should closely integrate with existing neighbourhoods to contribute in a positive way to their vibrancy without increasing pressure on existing neighbourhood services to the detriment of existing residents.

The large, transient student population is one of the principal factors in Fallowfield requiring multiple strategic and policy interventions in order to create conditions in which a sustainable community might begin to grow. More student accommodation will only make this challenge greater. It will have a negative regeneration impact, not positive.

-Contribute to the re-use of Listed Buildings and other buildings with a particular heritage value.

The Oakley Villa is retained in the proposals but is nevertheless dwarfed by the huge newbuild element.

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9.61 (purpose-built accommodation)

The impacts of a large number of students living in an area can be more easily mitigated when they are living in purpose-built accommodation rather than unmanaged HMOs which have significant impacts on residential amenity for non-student neighbours.

Why add to the extent of the problem that, in the Policy's words, already need "mitigating"?

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C 2 - District Centres

Contribute positively to the diversity and mix of uses within centres. New development should respect and enhance the character of existing centres.

Again, the existing uses and character of Fallowfield is already prejudiced by the large number of student residents. Additional purpose-built student accommodation will contribute nothing to the diversity or character of the Fallowfield District centre.

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Policy C6 - South Manchester District Centres (including Fallowfield)

In Fallowfield and Withington, development which creates more diverse centres will be supported, in particular involving improvement to the retail offer to meet the full range of residents in surrounding neighbourhoods and promoting community uses. Development of the University of Manchester facilities adjoining Fallowfield District Centre will be supported as a means of improving the balance of uses within the centre.

At 50%, students are already over-represented in Fallowfield. This Policy is contradictory but the reality is beyond dispute: to encourage more diverse local centres, a diverse population is required.

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EN2 - Tall Buildings

Tall buildings are defined as buildings which are substantially taller than their neighbourhoods and/or which significantly change the skyline.

Proposals for tall buildings will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they

- Are of excellent design quality,
- Are appropriately located,
- Contribute positively to sustainability,
- Contribute positively to place making, for example as a landmark, by terminating a view, or by signposting a facility of significance, and
- Will bring significant regeneration benefits.

A fundamental design objective will be to ensure that tall buildings complement the City's key existing building assets and make a positive contribution to the evolution of a unique, attractive and distinctive Manchester, including to its skyline and approach views.

Suitable locations will include sites within and immediately adjacent to the City Centre with particular encouragement given to non-conservation areas and sites which can easily be served by public transport nodes.

Elsewhere within Manchester, tall building development will only be supported where, in addition to the requirements listed above, it can be shown to play a positive role in a coordinated place-making approach to a wider area. Suitable locations are likely to relate to existing district centres. The height of tall buildings in such locations should relate more to the local, rather than the City Centre, urban context.

By their very size, tall buildings can have a significant impact on the local environment and its micro-climate. It is therefore expected that this impact be modelled and that submissions for tall buildings also include appropriate measures to create an attractive, pedestrian friendly local environment.

It will be necessary for the applicant/developer to demonstrate that proposals for tall buildings are viable and deliverable”.

Even acknowledging that design quality and appropriate locations are subjective, the proposal will clearly fail to deliver against many of the tall buildings' criteria laid out in the Policy, including:

-Sustainability: less diverse, transient population

-Place-making/complementary buildings: 13 storey/4 storey/5 storey modern, anonymously designed apartment blocks with no local referencing

-Regeneration: narrowing of the demographic dilutes still further the prospect of foster the conditions needed to breathe new life into the area

Height and local context (non-city centre): The height of the proposed buildings demonstrably does not relate to the local context as explicitly require by the Policy.

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EN3 - Heritage

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre.

New developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of

areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains.

The proposal fails to celebrate the character of the existing built-environment and will detrimentally affect the adjacent park.

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PA 1 - Developer Contributions

If the application/replacement application is approved, then this Policy should be maximised in order to mitigate the multiple, negative effects of the development.

Final Observations & Summary

There is misguided assumption underlying the application i.e., that additional purpose-built student accommodation will divert students away from Houses in Multiple Occupation and towards the new self-contained provision. On the contrary, the effect of the development would be to reinforce and expand Fallowfield as a student living destination; demand for all forms of student accommodation will increase in Fallowfield and surrounds, including Withington, thereby threatening quality of life and long-term sustainability of the affected areas, residents and communities.

There are numerous references in the Core Strategy to the creation of diverse, sustainable, desirable communities and furthermore, there is an acknowledgement that the city centre and adjacent locations are more suited to the provision of student accommodation.

Withington Civic Society strongly opposes the application.

Thank you,

Withington Civic Society
30.01.2021