Comments for Planning Application 143024/FO/2025

Application Summary

Application Number: 143024/FO/2025
Address: Sister Plot C Former Umist Campus Altrincham Street Manchester M1 7JA
Proposal: Phased development comprising: Phase A - demolition of existing buildings and structures, erection of a basement (C1 Building and C2 Building) and a podium across lower ground and upper ground floors comprising flexible commercial space (Class E and/or Sui Generis drinking establishment), erection of a building (C1 Building) to form offices (Class E), landscaping works, highways, access, servicing, infrastructure and other associated works; |cr|Phase B: erection of a podium across lower ground and upper ground floors and a new building (C2 Building) to form offices (Class E) and flexible commercial and community uses (Class E, F2 and/ or Sui Generis drinking establishment), alterations to the existing Sculptural Wall (Hollaway Wall), relocation of existing art work, landscaping works, highways, access, servicing, infrastructure and other associated works; |cr|Phase C - change of use and associated works to railway Viaduct arches to form flexible commercial units (Class E, and/ or Sui Generis - drinking establishment) including highways, access and servicing arrangements, and other associated works.
Case Officer: Jennifer Atkinson

Customer Details

Name: Not Available
Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of the Public
Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application
Comment Reasons:
Comment:Subject: Objection to Planning Application 143024/FO/2025 - Wholesale Demolition Heritage Assets at Former UMIST Campus Site, including Barnes Wallis and Wright Robinson Building, Manchester Meeting Place, Morton Laboratory, Moffat Building, and the Butterfly Stairs.

I am writing to formally object in the strongest possible terms to planning application 143024/FO/2025, which proposes demolition of many buildings at the former UMIST Campus site. My objection is based on the following material planning considerations, in accordance with Manchester City Council's guidelines on "How to comment on a planning application."

Loss of Significant Architectural Heritage Assets and Twentieth-Century Built Heritage

The former UMIST Campus is a site of profound architectural and historical significance, representing a substantial and coherent collection of twentieth-century built heritage. This application proposes the demolition of key structures including the Barnes Wallis and Wright

Robinson Building, Manchester Meeting Place, Morton Laboratory, Moffat Building, and the Butterfly Stairs. These buildings, individually and collectively, embody distinct periods of academic and architectural development in Manchester. They showcase particular styles, materials, and planning philosophies that are increasingly rare due to ongoing demolition across the city. The comprehensive proposed demolition of this site would result in an irreversible and catastrophic loss of an entire campus ensemble, destroying a valuable legacy of post-war development and educational infrastructure.

This wholesale destruction represents a significant blow to the city's twentieth-century built heritage. As existing examples of this era are steadily eroded, the collective significance of surviving sites like the UMIST Campus grows. To permit the demolition of these specific buildings - the Barnes Wallis and Wright Robinson Building, Manchester Meeting Place, Morton Laboratory, Moffat Building, and the Butterfly Stairs - without a robust and demonstrable justification for the loss of each, would be a failure to protect and appreciate an entire stratum of Manchester's architectural history. It would set a dangerous precedent, implying that entire historical campuses can be simply erased, irrespective of their collective architectural or historical value.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area - Loss of Established Identity
The UMIST Campus possesses a distinct and established character, formed by the interrelationship of its buildings, open spaces, and mature landscaping. This identity, heavily influenced by structures such as the Barnes Wallis and Wright Robinson Building and the unique architectural features like the Butterfly Stairs, contributes significantly to the visual amenity and sense of place within this part of the city. The proposed wholesale demolition would obliterate this established character, replacing it with an entirely new development whose design and impact are, at this stage, speculative. Such an extreme intervention would lead to a profound loss of local distinctiveness and an erosion of the area's historical layering. The existing campus represents a tangible historical footprint that should be preserved, or at the very least, sensitively integrated into any future development, rather than entirely removed.

Inadequate Justification for Comprehensive Demolition and Lack of Sustainable Alternatives

For a site of such considerable architectural heritage, the application provides insufficient justification for the necessity of wholesale demolition of all these buildings. Demolition should always be considered a last resort, particularly when dealing with large-scale developments involving numerous structures like the Barnes Wallis and Wright Robinson Building, Manchester Meeting Place, Morton Laboratory, and Moffat Building. The application should demonstrate that all feasible options for retention, adaptation, and sensitive reuse of existing buildings have been thoroughly explored and conclusively ruled out. Without such a robust assessment, the proposal appears to be a convenient, rather than necessary, solution, disregarding the environmental and heritage benefits of adaptive reuse. Sustainable development principles advocate for the retention and repurposing of existing structures to reduce embodied carbon and minimize waste, considerations that appear to be overlooked in this comprehensive demolition proposal.

I strongly urge the planning department to refuse application 143024/FO/2025. The proposed wholesale destruction of the former UMIST Campus, including the significant Barnes Wallis and Wright Robinson Building, Manchester Meeting Place, Morton Laboratory, Moffat Building, and the unique Butterfly Stairs, and partial destruction of the Grade II listed Hollaway Wall, represents an unacceptable and irreversible loss of significant architectural heritage assets. This proposal fundamentally undermines the character of the area and demonstrates a lack of commitment to preserving Manchester's valuable twentieth-century built environment. A more thoughtful, sustainable, and heritage-led approach to the redevelopment of this site is absolutely essential.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]