



Historic England

Ms Jennifer Atkinson
Manchester City Council
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Manchester
M60 2LA

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: L01593176

19 June 2025

Dear Ms Atkinson

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021

**SISTER PLOT C, FORMER UMIST CAMPUS, ALTRINCHAM STREET,
MANCHESTER, M1 7JA
Application No. 143025/LO/2025**

Thank you for your letter of 30 May 2025 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Significance

The Hollaway Wall is a substantial concrete boundary wall designed as a piece of public sculptural art by Antony Hollaway and constructed in 1968. Its dual function is intrinsic to its significance, and it is understood equally as a piece of art and as a structure.

Hollaway, along with his contemporary William Mitchell, was employed by London County Council's (LCC) housing division from 1959 to produce artworks for the many new construction projects undertaken in the post-war period, including housing estates, schools and shopping centres. The idea being that the new environments, primarily built from concrete, could be made more attractive through works of art. Several other local authorities commissioned public art in the post-war period, much of which focussed on new towns. Throughout this period, public art also became popular



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with educational establishments, such as UMIST, where the intention was that by interacting the art on a daily basis by simply walking past it, it would become integrated into people's lives.

Using the skills developed while working at LCC and research undertaken for the Cement and Concrete Association, Hollaway designed the wall in collaboration with Harry M Fairhurst, as a dual-purpose barrier and artwork. The huge concrete curtain panels of varying depths and widths are slotted together to produce a striking Brutalist piece, with a particular rhythm that is accentuated by the thin gaps between some of the panels allowing light to glance through. The structure effectively demonstrates the ideal of integrating art into the mid-20th century townscape and is an important landmark in the area.

Impacts

The proposals seek to enclose the majority of the wall within the ground floor of a new 20-storey building on the site. This will require the removal of ten concrete panels from the listed structure and the relocation of two other panels, which will harm the significance of the asset. These removals constitute over a quarter of the wall's total length.

We welcome the plans to conserve and clean the wall and to make enhancements to its current setting, which we feel could be improved on. We recognise that the proposals are to allow continued public access to the wall, albeit at certain times of day, and to celebrate the wider site's important mid-20th century architectural and scientific history by integrating the wall into the proposed redevelopment plans.

Our concerns regarding the proposals to enclose the wall and to remove sections of it are set out below.



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Proposals to remove sections of the wall

We are concerned over the extent of removal of sections of the wall, which would disrupt its rhythm and would be harmful to its artistic value. The wall was designed in a specific way from varying sized blocks of concrete, to create shadows and allow shafts of light through. It was also conceived as a solid barrier; a function which is reinforced by its blocky and robust construction and appearance. By removing sections of the wall, its legibility as a functioning structure and as a piece of art are both diminished, and the level of resulting harm to its significance would be very high.

The removal of a continuous run of seven sections of the wall at its northern end would be particularly harmful to its significance. The resulting gap between the external corner piece of the wall and the main part of the wall inside the building would be too great to enable an understanding of it as a continuous piece.

Proposals to enclose the wall inside a building

The wall was conceived as a continuous structural barrier and has a distinct interrelationship with traffic and the outdoors; enclosing the wall within a building would involve dividing it into six separate parts through the removal of panels. The proposal to divide and enclose the main part of the wall within a building would physically and visually sever these links and alter that relationship, which would be harmful to its significance. It would no longer be a physical boundary feature, as the eastern boundary of the developed area would shift beyond the limits of the wall.

The aim of Hollaway and his contemporaries was to integrate art into people's lives by making it readily accessible day and night. The idea of enclosing the wall would also largely remove it from the public domain and alter the public's day to day experience of it.





Policy

National policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is articulated in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). These policies state that assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (para. 202) and that applicants should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting, to a level sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (para. 207).

When considering the impact of a proposed development, great weight should be given to an asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be (para. 212). Paragraph 219 of the NPPF states that new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets should look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal significance. Any harm to significance requires clear and convincing justification (para. 213).

In practice that means that less harmful alternative solutions should be explored through the pre-application and application processes. Para. 215 instructs that the Council should eventually weigh harm against the public benefits of proposals in judging the planning balance.

Position

We have concerns over the proposed changes to the Holloway Wall, and that the level of resulting harm to its significance would be at the higher end of less than substantial. We do not think that this harm has been clearly or convincingly justified.

The enclosure of the wall inside a building and the removal of ten sections of the wall



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and relocation of two sections at the southern end will fundamentally alter the way the wall is experienced and understood.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 202, 212 and 213 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

[Redacted contact information]



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