

Emailed to: jennifer.atkinson@manchester.gov.uk, planning@manchester.gov.uk

20/06/2025

Dear Jennifer Atkinson,

Site: Sculptural Wall, London Road, Manchester ('Hollaway Wall')

Ref: 143025/LO/2025

The Twentieth Century Society is the National Amenity Society charged with the protection and appreciation of post-1914 heritage. We have been notified of a Listed Building Consent application for *alterations to Sculptural Wall* for the Grade II listed Hollaway Wall.

Significance

The wall was the Society's 'building of the month' in January 2009. Professor Richard Brook, author of the entry, wrote that 'the work is certainly of national importance insofar as it reflects a particular condition and set of circumstances that uniquely afforded a large number of artists significant funding into material research and development'. Designed as a sculptural wall and sound buffer by the artist Antony Hollaway, it was produced in collaboration with Harry M Fairhurst, of the important and locally significant practice Fairhurst and Son.

Hartwell, Hyde and Pevsner's **Lancashire: Manchester and the South-East** (2004) from the **Buildings of England** series, says of the Hollaway wall: 'the universities are the best places to see PUBLIC ART of the early-mid 1960s. At UMIST, *Antony Hollaway's* highly unusual sculptural wall defines the E edge of the campus'. The significance of the Hollaway wall, not only as a sculpture but as a demarcation of the existing UMIST campus, is well understood, with that definition and demarcation key to the significance of the wall.

Statutorily listed at Grade II in 2011, the wall was designated for its design quality, the relationship between Hollaway and Fairhurst, and its functional role 'separating people from the noise and visual and physical intrusion of vehicular traffic', as well as its high standard of construction. The Society regards it as an important twentieth century work of public sculpture and function.

Policy

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; 2024)** states at **Paragraph 202:**

202. *Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.*

At **Paragraph 212:**

212. *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

And at **Paragraph 213(a):**

213. *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*

a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional.

The Society's Assessment

The proposed 'folding down' of the Grade II listed Antony Hollaway wall is unacceptable. The Society strongly objects to this proposal. The Society was consulted on this scheme at pre-application stage, and raised our objections at that point. The proposals were presented to the Society's casework committee, a body of experts in twentieth century architecture. The committee regards this proposal as harmful to the significance of the designated heritage asset that is the Sculptural Wall.

The Hollaway wall **must** be read as a coherent sculpture, the strength of which is derived, at least partially, from its length and scale. As a singular, monumental artwork, the act of folding and flattening areas of the wall is highly destructive. This proposal is not comparable to, for example, introducing limited new openings to a listed boundary wall. By reading the wall solely as a boundary structure, as opposed to an artwork by a major twentieth century artist, the understanding of the wall as a solid demarcation line is lost. The alteration and 'folding' of this wall would result in a high loss of the significance of the sculpture, by altering its monumentality and dissolving its clear demarcation of the boundary of the UMIST site.

Similarly, the partial enclosure of the wall would result in a high loss of significance for the same reason: by dividing the wall into an interior and exterior component it will alter the understanding of the wall as a whole. It will also result in uneven weathering, damaging the appearance of the wall.

Paragraph **3.2.2.** of the **Hollaway Wall: Structural Appraisal & Outline Methodology Report** (2025) states that 'The Wall is currently external... and has therefore been subject to environmental factors such as freeze-thaw, carbonation, chloride-induced corrosion and sulphate attack'. The statement implies that the weathering of an external concrete sculpture is a negative attribute that ought to be prevented through the partial enclosure of the wall. However, given that the design of the wall not only provided for expected environmental weathering ('these external conditions likely necessitated higher durability measures, such as increased concrete cover', 'the Wall was originally designed for an external environment and therefore has heightened durability'), but was designed to 'enhance weathering and texture' by the use of 'rough sawn formwork' (Brook), the removal of the wall from its designed environment (outside, next to an active road), can be regarded as harmful to the significance of the wall. The Hollaway wall is currently in-situ in its intended external location. The partial encapsulation of the wall will harm its heritage significance, both by altering the environment in which it sits, and for which it was designed, and by leading to uneven weathering due to the partial enclosure of the wall and the partial 'folding' of the wall segments. As per **NPPF 212**, great weight should be given to an asset's conservation. These proposals cannot be regarded as conservation of the heritage asset that is the wall.

We regard the proposed scheme to cause *substantial harm* to the Grade II listed wall. As per **NPPF 213**, substantial harm to grade II listed buildings should be exceptional. This high bar of exceptionalism has not been met. Clear and convincing justification for the proposed *substantial harm* has not been provided. Both options A and B of the **Hollaway Wall Strategies**, provided in part **3.2.8.** of the **Design and Access Statement**, which involve retaining the wall in-situ, whole and outside, were discounted as strategy options for not meeting a 'c20,000 sq ft net area brief requirement'. While 'typical floorplates' of this scale are recommended in the brief to meet the c. 500,000 sq ft net office space required by the brief, it is by no means a requirement. Clear and convincing justification that this office area cannot be accounted for elsewhere in the site is not provided, contrary to the requirements for **NPPF 213**. The **Planning and Tall Building Statement** states on page **2** that '*this phase of development will deliver 72,928 sq m Grade A office space across two buildings*'. This is equivalent to approximately 785,000 sq ft of Grade A office space – over one-and-a-half times as much floor space as required to meet the 500,000 sq ft net office space of the brief. As such, there is no clear and convincing justification for options A and B of the Hollaway Wall Strategies to have been discounted, contrary to the requirements of **NPPF 213**. These options which are more sympathetic to the wall, retaining its significance as a heritage asset, ought to be reconsidered.

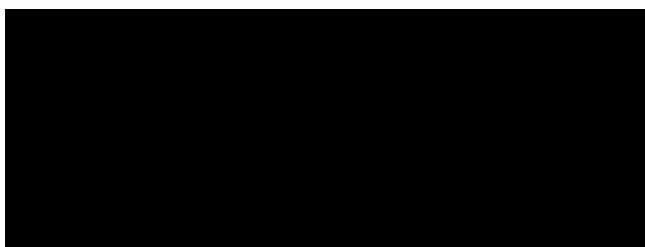
To reiterate, the sculptural wall must be treated as an artwork, rather than as simply a boundary wall (although it achieves both, aligning with Hollaway's artistic philosophy of combining public art with function). The significance of the wall lies, to a great degree, in its intactness, scale, and length. Importantly, the wall was always intended to be read as a public sculpture from a specific vantage point: the public realm to the east of the wall that it helps to delineate from the university campus.

The claim made in part **3.2.10** of the **Design and Access Statement** that retaining the wall as-is will result in it being unable to 'be appreciated in the round without leaving the building and walking round it' does not address this one-sided public character of the wall. We disagree with the claim made in this part that 'folding' sections of the wall will not impact the legibility of the wall. The wall's legibility is derived from its completeness, and the lack of permeability along its primary length.

While the Society would rather that the wall remains outside, we accept the principle of enclosing the wall in a new building, on the understanding that the room is fully publicly accessible. However, this would be on the condition that the wall is fully enclosed, rather than partially as currently proposed. This is to allow the structure to remain legible as a complete and continuous work. We object strongly to the proposals to 'fold' sections of the wall, due to the impact that the 'folding' would have on the understanding of the artwork, and subsequently on its significance as a Grade II listed heritage asset.

Yours sincerely,

Gus Wray



Caseworker

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Remit: The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in the *Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications – Notification to Historic England and National Amenity Societies and the Secretary of State (England) Direction 2021*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.