[redacted]

19th June, 2025

Julie Roscoe
Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing,
Planning,
Level 6,
Town hall Extension,
PO Box 532,
Manchester,
M60 2KLA.

Dear Julie Roscoe,

FAO Jennifer Atkinson. Consultation response on Planning applications Nos:
143024/FO/2025 - Phased development of SISTER Plot C, Former UMIST Campus, Altrincham Street, Manchester.
143025/LO/2025 - Listed building consent for alterations to the Sculptural Wall (Hollaway Wall), SISTER Plot C, Former UMIST Campus, Altrincham Street, Manchester.
143060/LO/2025 - Listed Building Consent for alterations to Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Viaduct, SISTER Plot C, Former UMIST Campus, Altrincham Street, Manchester.

Thank you for your consultation letters regarding the above planning applications which all relate to one proposal for the development of one plot (Plot C) within the wider SISTER development. We make the following comments on the proposal which we trust you will take on board as appropriate when considering each of these three applications which we appreciate relate to differing aspects of the proposal.

1. Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF)

The SRF process enables proposers (such as developers and landowners) to put forward their proposal for a site - usually with active City Council involvement - which the City Council then approves and so effectively adopts as City Council policy. This is a far less rigorous process than is required for adopting a statutory development plan but appears to be given the same type of weight in City Council decision making. It is noted that, in this instance, the notification of local residents of SRF consultation events was inconsistent and, certainly for Granby Village residents, some notification did not, for whatever reason, take place as intended. It is also noted that formal written consultation responses made to the Council were not adequately reflected in the report that went to committee when the adoption of the SRF was being decided. For example, the officer report paid little - if any - heed to comments regarding heritage both within and adjacent to the SRF site. This sets a

basis for minimal trust in local democracy with no sense that the City Council is protecting the interests of local residents as well as supporting the aspirations of the development industry and its investors.

The planning process is 'plan led' so any planning applications would be expected to be determined within the scope of planning policy including, presumably, any relevant SRF. Our concern has always been that the SRF process makes the subsequent planning application process largely meaningless as many key decisions around, for example, use, siting, scale/massing, elevation design and access have already been made by the SRF process. One of our ward councillors has reassured us in written comments that this would not be the case and that any planning applications for component parts of the SRF site would be dealt with on their own merits and not necessarily needing to conform with the SRF. Nevertheless **various documents in the application refer to the SRF as if it provides the definitive approach towards the site and that decisions have already been made.**

Setting to one side this objection to the SRF process, the applications raise the following objections:

2. Hollaway Wall

The proposal should have been evolved to accommodate the Hollaway Wall and its setting rather than requiring harmful change to them to accommodate a particular development proposal:
Taking an appropriate, conservation-led approach towards the Hollaway Wall from the outset would have avoided the need for a good deal of the submitted Design and Access Statement to be devoted to attempting to justify the inappropriate and highly harmful approach now being proposed towards this designated heritage asset and its setting.

The submitted Design and Access Statement reflects information previously seen within the SRF proposal that shows how this listed building has been treated from the outset as an obstacle and inconvenience to the proposed development. The proposers have consistently sought a proposal that requires considerable, harmful alteration to this listed building and its setting seemingly in order to maximise the development potential of the SRF site. The overall SRF site is extensive and a different approach to this relatively small area on its eastern boundary should have been followed that acknowledged the considerable heritage significance of the wall (as acknowledged by its statutory listing) and its setting. Such an approach should have protected this listed building (including by retaining it intact) and provided an appropriate setting into the future and that allowed the remaining wider SRF proposal to be organised to achieve the overall aims of the SRF including the quantum of floorspace sought.

It is understood that in recent times the proposal has been revised to require fewer parts of the wall to be removed or laid flat on the ground to create part of a new floorscape. While any reduction in harm is welcomed, it continues to be the case that a more appropriately evolved proposal would have avoided any such harm including by ensuring the retention of the existing gated entrance at the northern end that is an integral part of the original building as listed.

The suggestion the wall is a barrier to movement excessive:
The proposal advises that that the wall is a barrier to access into the SRF site but without also clearly acknowledging the extent of this barrier effect is limited. The length of the

Hollaway Wall is little different to the length of many of the publicly impermeable urban blocks within the city centre which people have no problem walking around. The wall has Altrincham Street at its northern end which is the natural route past this end of the wall for those approaching from the north, from Piccadilly Railway Station and from the east along Fairfield Street. Moving southwards from the London Road/Fairfield Street junction, the next possible route from the east side of London Road towards the site (including from Mayfield) is Travis Street which emerges onto London Road further to the south than the southern end of the Hollaway Wall. There remains a considerable length of the London Road SRF/SISTER site frontage south of the Hollaway Wall that would allow various opportunities for access into the SRF/SISTER site for those reaching London Road from Travis Street, Berry Street and Baring Street as well as from the south along London Road without the need to touch the Hollaway Wall. Such access could be achieved today by unlocking an existing pedestrian gateway (that had remained open until recent times) or by reconfiguring the external areas around the existing Morton Laboratory (identified for demolition) and the Maths and Social Sciences Building - both these form part of the SRF/SISTER site. The wall has only become a barrier because it finds itself running down the centre of a new encapsulating internal space.

The wall somehow obstructs future proposals for London Road and access into the SRF site:
Advice provided at SISTER Community Forum meetings has been that changes to the status and layout of London Road are outside the scope of the SRF/SISTER proposal and that the City Council currently has no plans for change. As noted above, if/when the treatment of London Road changes, the retention of the Hollaway Wall would not prevent various convenient and legible east-west pedestrian routes being provided across London Road directly into the SRF/SISTER site. The chosen order of phasing of development should not require such access to be provided at the expense of the Hollaway Wall when such access would be capable of being provided by future phases (including Zone F) of the development without requiring such harm to a designated heritage asset and its setting.

The deteriorated condition of the Holloway Wall is incorrectly used to justify the current harmful proposal:
The wall was built for, and has remained a part of the University - the University retains involvement in the SRF site and its regeneration. It is the University that has failed to appropriately maintain the listed building and its setting, and (as noted by the National Planning Policy Framework) its deteriorated condition should not be used to justify the harmful proposal. It was also the University that installed green wire mesh fencing within the setting and physically affixed it to the listed building (with associated harm) possibly without the benefit of planning approval. There is now an opportunity for the University (via its involvement in SISTER) to ensure the wall is appropriately restored and to ensure the appropriate treatment of the setting which, if designed sensitively, could provide for a more active, publicly accessible external space such as an outside seating for a cafe provided (possibly as a part of a new building) adjacent to the southern end of the wall.

The retention of the wall would hinder an access into the site if Network Rail pursue a proposal to widen the railway viaduct:
It had been understood that the past proposal for the widening of the railway viaduct to accommodate two extra through-lines at Piccadilly Railway Station had been abandoned despite this capacity issue being part of the justification for implemented works in Castlefield that caused substantial harm to heritage assets there. The current SISTER proposal suggests this may not be the case and, if so, would require the eastern end of

Altrincham Street to be closed. This needs to be clarified as surely this has implications for the SISTER proposal in terms of the envisaged access to and through the SRF/SISTER site, the siting/design of the proposed building and the treatment of the railway viaduct arches. Any need to accommodate Network Rail's proposal should not, however, be used as a justification for harming the Hollaway Wall including its gated return element to Altrincham Street as a part of this SISTER proposal. Instead alternative means of legibly accessing the SRF/SISTER site would need to be devised.

Hollaway Wall conclusion:
As noted in the NPPF, heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved so they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. We object to the proposed harmful and unnecessary alteration of the Hollaway Wall and its setting which would be avoided if their heritage significance were to be fully acknowledged and a more appropriate and sensitive proposal evolved. The provision of an appropriately located/designed interpretation board as a part of the proposed development would better reveal the heritage significance of the wall.

3. The proposed treatment of the viaduct arches to create new frontages

The existing Altrincham Street elevation of the Grade II listed railway viaduct includes a variety of treatments of the arch openings - some open, some completely infilled others infilled but including a variety of door and window openings. This represents a process of historic change that has heritage significance rather than modern day alteration with little or no such significance. This variety of treatments contributes to the heritage significance of the viaduct and to its visual interest within the streetscene. The proposal merely removes any existing infills and provides the archways with a uniform, homogenous frontage treatment resulting in the loss of historic built fabric as well as the ability to understand the way in which the use of the arches has differed and evolved over time. It diminishes the heritage significance of the structure including by removing visual interest. This approach gives rise to an objection to this element of the proposal. A revised proposal that enables the re-use of the arches while protecting their heritage significance should be possible but would require a bespoke approach to each archway and possibly accepting that not all arches would readily accommodate the same range of future uses as is currently proposed.

4. The proposed demolition and design of the new building

Objection to the demolition and alteration associated with the Hollaway Wall and railway viaduct archways is covered above. Objection is also raised to the proposed demolition of the 'butterfly steps' that lead from Altrincham Street down to the Bowling Green which are an iconic element of 1960's design and an intrinsic part of the setting of the 1960's buildings being retained including the adjacent Renold Building. The retention of this structure would not preclude the proposal for widening Altrincham Street (and provision of a concealed service vehicle route below), the provision of a suitably designed/incorporated route for disabled people or high quality external space to replace the Bowling Green.

Otherwise the need for the other proposed demolition is understood without objection (although the weakening of the distinct modernist character of the area is regretted) provided the design of the proposed new building seeks to incorporate details and use of materials that have a resonance with the special 1960's character of this site. The elevation articulation and detailed use - as well as the type and quality - of elevation materials will be critical to the success of the appearance of the built form.

The ground level siting of the new building as it fronts London Road would need reconsideration if the proposed harm to the Hollaway Wall is to be avoided. However, a high quality design could perhaps include upper floors that project over the wall provided such projection would be well clear of the top of the wall. The reasons for dismissing this option in the Design and Access Statement are not particularly strong and could be overcome with sufficient thought and is far more preferable to the far more harmful encapsulation and alteration of the wall now being proposed. Given the student accommodation building that is already underway immediately to the north of the proposed building, perhaps the height of the half of the proposed building as it fronts London Road could be increased slightly to compensate for the loss of area due to better accommodating the Hollaway Wall?

5. Proposed internal and external uses

The area within which Granby Village is located already has a range of uses that can generate disturbance for the large number of local residents living within it. This can be from the everyday use of buildings and associated external areas (such as the bars and night clubs in the Canal Street area, Mayfield Depot, the Pendulum Hotel (Sackville Street), comings and goings relating to venues on the southern end of Princess Street, and the Retro Bar (operating until recently and also on Sackville Street). This is especially the case where acoustic measures are negated by, for example, doors being propped open. Sackville Gardens and Mayfield Park are used for various organised events that include amplified sound systems. Then there is a range of anti-social behaviour and vehicle noise (including loud music from vehicles, revving and car horns). It may be useful to note that in recent times a nightclub use in the vicinity of the Mayfield Depot gave rise to such a level of noise in Granby Village that the Council officers attending confirmed it was causing noise nuisance requiring action.

The proposed animation of the SISTER/SRF area is welcomed in principle but only if the proposed internal and external uses do not increase the level of disturbance already being experienced by residents. We request that all the various internal and external uses that could be encompassed by the permission being sought are considered with the possibility of excluding uses that by their nature would be likely to be inappropriate in a largely residential area. For any remaining uses that are to be included within any permission we request enforceable conditions appropriate for each type of use and its location. For example, external uses and events should not include amplified sound and should be located centrally within the site. Internal noisy uses such as those with amplified sound or just due to sheer numbers of people must have acoustic measures that are implemented and maintained. Hours of operation should be in place especially for any external areas associated with, for example, bars and other food, drink and entertainment venues including for external smoking areas. Refuse stores should be adequate in size and accessed internally to avoid the noise of bottles being emptied into externally accessed refuse bins late at night.

6. Proposed new east-west service route (including concealed service tunnel under Altrincham Street

The SRF shows a continuous, straight east/west route linking London Road to Princess Street along the line of Altrincham Street with the inference that it would have a consistent status along its length - the same width and quality. However, the proposed concealed service route runs under this pedestrian route. It is unclear how the proposed service route

will emerge from its concealment to presumably ramp up to Sackville Street while ensuring the new width and alignment of the Altrincham Street pedestrian route is maintained. It is also unclear how this will manifest itself. Views from Sackville Street - a principal gateway route into the City Centre - should not include a yawning, gated utilitarian ramp entrance or tunnel mouth. This should be understood now as it is within the SRF/SISTER site even though outside the Plot C application site.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Outlook

Planning Applications: former UMIST campus

From [redacted]
Date Tue 17/06/2025 11:16
To Jennifer Atkinson [redacted]

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June 17th 2025

Re: Planning Applications 143024/FO/2025 ; 143060/LO/2025 ; 143025/LO/2025

Dear Ms Atkinson,

Thank you for your correspondence about the proposed planning applications for the former UMIST campus area in central Manchester. As a resident of Granby Village, M1 7AX for the past 26 years, I am writing to raise objections to any building work in this area for the following reasons.

1. The M1 area is densely populated and is already acutely short of open, recreational spaces
The UMIST campus is a peaceful, lawned, landscaped area (recently re-landscaped with new trees) and is frequently used by the local community for walks, jogging, pet exercise, sunbathing, and for children's play. It was a lifeline during the COVID pandemic as a place to exercise (a scenario that may re-occur in the future). Central Manchester has an acute lack of such spaces; Sackville Gardens are too small for the purposes outlined above, and the newer Mayfield Park is a substantial distance away – across the busy London Road – from many M1 apartment blocks. The loss of the UMIST space would reduce local residents' recreational options considerably.

2. The M1 area has reached saturation point with recent construction work
In recent times, against residents' wishes, plans for accommodation / retail units have been approved, such as the enormous New Square development opposite Canal Street. This reduced the natural light reaching the apartments of nearby residents. Part of the lawned area opposite the railway viaduct / UMIST campus is now under construction for what appears to be multi-floored student accommodation. The few remaining open spaces in M1 are constantly being encroached upon.

3. No compelling reason for further "office space" / "retail outlets" and other options available for these
The proposed loss of the UMIST campus area for the purpose of building offices and retail outlets is unconvincing in the extreme. Across the UK, hybrid working is now the norm, and there is no statistical indication of office use returning to pre-COVID levels; this undermines any argument in favour building new office blocks. M1 residents have no shortage of retail outlets, bars, restaurants, etc. If there is a need for new office blocks and retail outlets, there

are various derelict buildings in central Manchester locations that can be repurposed (see my final paragraph) and I feel that most residents – including myself – would support that.

4. Further construction would cause environmental and traffic problems

Building new office blocks, shops, bars, etc, on the UMIST campus would be a gravitational pull for people who would work there and use those facilities. The density of traffic in M1 is already considerable and it is not clear to me how the influx of extra cars and other vehicles would be dealt with. Traffic / parking issues would become more problematic than they are now. What extra parking facilities would be provided to mitigate this? Doing nothing would not be an option.

While I recognize the need to stimulate the local economy, the prevailing mindset of monetizing / exploiting every “spare” metre of space in central urban areas usually results in short-term profit for the few and in a deterioration in the quality of life for local residents. The UMIST campus is frequently used by local residents and is one of the few remaining open spaces is a densely populated area; once these are gone, they are lost forever.

There are numerous opportunities to repurpose existing buildings; for example, the old “Cornerhouse” building - in a prime plot opposite Oxford Road station - seems to have fallen into disuse again. I would argue that regenerating / repurposing existing built-up areas is the way forward here.

Thank you for considering my viewpoint; I would politely ask that these planning applications are rejected.

Kind regards,

[redacted]