

Withington Civic Society

Response to The Christie Strategic Planning Framework Addendum

Paterson Redevelopment Project

January 2019

This response is provided on behalf of Withington Civic Society by its Planning Group following the Paterson Redevelopment Proposals consultation held on 10th January 2019 which some members of the Group attended, with others reviewing the associated Initial Public Consultation Draft document.

Overall, the Civic Society recognises the important role which The Christie plays both in the local area and nationally, and it supports the redevelopment of the fire-damaged buildings in principle. However, the Planning Group are unanimous in their objection to the draft proposals and consider them to be gross over-development of the site. The wire frame drawings on page 28 of the consultation document bring the sheer height and scale of the building into sharp focus.

The proposed 9 (above ground) storeys' high building will be utterly incongruous amongst the surrounding development, dwarfing adjacent buildings along Wilmslow Road and even towering over the Proton Centre. The Christie should understand that this is a strongly held view of the Planning Group and we will maintain this objection to any future planning application that continues to propose this height and scale of building.

Of note is that it is understood that the existing Paterson building contains circa 6,800m² of floor-space, with the previous MCRC2 proposals being for circa 2,800m² floor-space. Yet this proposed redevelopment is for 25,000m² of floor-space, which has not been justified in the consultation. The inevitable net increase in staff at the facility is notable by its absence in the consultation materials – with parking for them being the perennial issue. The proposals should not be silent on the additional employment and put forward clear proposals as to how this will be accommodated – “Consultant Workspace” is a somewhat disingenuous term for offices and an intensification of use.

However, the Planning Group does have a suggestion as to how this overdevelopment may in part be resolved. We propose that the landscaped garden proposals should be dropped and the building footprint extended south towards Oak Road. There is no need whatsoever for a garden in this location, with Withington Green opposite providing a more inviting and attractive place to sit for local residents (more accessible on the east side of Wilmslow Road) and staff. For patients, the Maggie's Centre provides an excellent facility and there is other open space around the Oglesby building for staff use.

Instead, this “garden” area could be incorporated into the building providing a wider, more usable floorplate and enabling the reduction in overall height of the building by at least 3 storeys, hopefully 4. Indeed, at upper levels, the building could be stepped back at this end to provide for a roof-terrace for staff away from the busy Oak Road/Wilmslow Road junction at ground level. This would also soften the mass of the building at this south-facing end and enhance its green credentials.

On a related theme, it is an absolute imperative that the building incorporates an attractive and secure internal cycle storage facility (on ground floor or basement) with showers, changing rooms and lockers provided not only for the workers in this building, but also across The Christie campus – something that remains a glaring omission and should be fundamental to achieving modal shift to non-car uses at a location adjacent to Manchester’s first dedicated segregated cycleway.

The building should also be designed so as to let passers-by and the local community see into it (and vice versa) and thereby provide a visual link to the laboratory work being undertaken and provide an active and attractive frontage as opposed to the current impenetrable and cold façade.

There should be no public or commercial uses allowed in the building (i.e. no shops or coffee shops or cafes) so as to encourage staff to make use of the plethora of options in Withington Village which, like all high streets, is in much need of increased revenue. The Christie should be embracing the local community and businesses and not continuing to turn its back by creating a self-sufficient campus where there is no need for staff to venture into the Village.

Other than these key points relating to the current proposals, moving forward we wish to see a well thought out and high quality design come forward that will enliven this key frontage to Wilmslow Road to form a key southern gateway to the Village.

We trust that our comments are informative and will be considered carefully, noting that we have a fundamental objection to the proposed height and scale of the building, but that this can be resolved by removing the landscaped garden element in order to extend the useful footprint and decrease the height by 3-4 storeys.

We look forward to continued engagement with the Project.

WCS Planning Group

January 2019

ENDS