**Objection Letter Template for Smallbrook Ringway Centre**

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Planning Application 2022/08496/PA for The Ringway Centre Smallbrook Queensway 1-4 Smallbrook Queensway Birmingham

I write to lodge my objection to the full application for the demolition of Smallbrook Ringway Centre and the erection of a 48-storey residential building (SBQ 3), and the outline application for the erection of two residential buildings (SBQ 1 and 2).

My objection is founded on three main concerns; architectural and urban design, heritage, environmental & social sustainability.

On architectural and urban design,

The proposal ignores the very particular qualities of this important site in terms of its architectural and urban design and heritage. Whilst there is clearly a need for investment in the Ringway Centre, the site does not need to be ‘redefined’ to achieve the ‘residential-led, mixed use development’ proposed. The Ringway Centre does not form ‘a physical barrier’ between parts of the city, rather it frames and announces a ‘gateway’ which celebrates the surrounding context.

Far from animating the city skyline, the proposed towers at 44, 48 and 54 storeys would overwhelm the immediate context, restricting available daylight at ground level. The dynamic, sculptural form of the Ringway Centre and the refined nature of its façade would be lost to over scaled development with a generic façade system which read as a commercial office development rather than homes for people. The proposal for 1680 homes would place undue pressure on the existing social infrastructure of the city with little provision for amenity space short of a small ‘plaza’ and ‘steps’, and privately accessed roof terraces.

On heritage,

Smallbrook was the first part of Birmingham’s Inner Ring Road to be built, and the only part that was designed with adjacent shops and pedestrian pavements – a conventional street. It was unusual in that the new highway and the new buildings were designed as a coherent whole. The Pevsner guide to *Birmingham and the West Midlands* describes it as “the best piece of mid C20 design in the city”, and James Roberts’ Ringway Centre is the definitive element of it: shaped by the highway, and responding in scale with it.

It is locally listed at Grade B. Buildings in this category are defined as “Structures or features that are important in the city-wide architectural context or the local street scene, and warrant positive efforts to ensure their preservation”. Many good buildings from the 1960s in Birmingham have been thoughtlessly demolished. This is one of the best, and it must be retained and repurposed. Roberts was one of the best architects working in the city in the mid C20, and was also the architect of the Grade II listed Rotunda further up the street.

On environmental & social sustainability, an energy-efficient retrofit of Ringway would be inherently much lower carbon than demolition and new building.  The three proposed very tall towers would be disproportionally energy-hungry in construction and operation.Up to 75% of the whole life carbon impact of a building can be the embodied carbon in the building/construction itself. When this is properly included, the proposed demolition and extensive new construction are revealed as particularly damaging, as they would both cause large and immediate “spikes” in carbon emissions. Far from reducing carbon, as City and UK policy requires in the next few years, the proposals would likely result in a significant increase in emissions.

The proposed demolition is inconsistent with national and local policies. Birmingham Development Plan targets 60% carbon reduction by 2027 - ahead of Government plans - and therefore rightly requires “the highest sustainability standards” including carbon reduction. In particular, the Plan supports “initiatives and opportunities to mitigate the effects of climate change by seeking the reuse of historic buildings … to reduce carbon emissions and secure sustainable development”. National Planning Policy (NPPF) also requires “radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions” through “the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings”. Best practice recommendations align with and reinforce these policies. Examples include the LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide’s first “primary action”, to “build less”, asking “is a new building necessary?"  LETI’s Embodied Carbon Primer prioritises “making use of the site and retrofitting existing buildings rather than building anew.”

The proposal represents “business as usual”: a wholly inadequate response to climate targets and policy. The UN Secretary General said recently “we are on a highway to climate hell, with our foot still on the accelerator”.  Imaginative retention, extension and reuse as the counter-proposal signposts another way forwards for this unique area of Birmingham.

In summary, all of the claims set out in the conclusion for the demolition of the existing building and construction of the three new towers could be accommodated by the creative, imaginative and responsible repurposing and extension to the buildings along Smallbrook Queensway. The application should be rejected outright.

Name -

Address –

Send to: planningandregenerationenquiries@birmingham.gov.uk