

ICOMOS



International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

8 July 2013

M. Patrice Zagamé Président, Novartis France

M. Joseph Jimenez CEO Novartis AG

Foncière Richelieu S.A.S.

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FRANCE

By Email: patrice.zagame@novartis.com; joe.jimenez@novartis.com

Ref: Urgent Request to reconsider redevelopment Novartis France headquarters, 14 Boulevard Richelieu, Rueil-Malmaison, France

Dear M Zagame and M Jimenez

The International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC20C) of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is very concerned to learn about the proposal to demolish parts of the Novartis France (formerly Sandoz) Headquarters complex in Rueil-Malmaison, an important Twentieth Century architectural component of the heritage of France.

The threat of demolition of this important building complex has been drawn to ICOMOS's attention by citizens of France and wider interests in recent weeks. A formal Heritage Alert request is now being investigated by the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage.

We are pleased to note that the building has served Novartis and Sandoz well since its commissioning by Sandoz in 1968 and that it is fully maintained, but we understand that there is currently a redevelopment proposal involving partial demolition which will greatly diminish its heritage values, a threat which may be imminent.

We are writing to respectfully ask that the redevelopment proposal for the building be urgently reconsidered by yourselves and the Novartis Board, as part of its corporate responsibility to the heritage of France and indeed to modern architecture internationally.

It is well-established that the Novartis complex is outstanding as an holistically designed architectural concept, the twentieth-century buildings being sensitively integrated remains of the old castle of Richelieu (17th century), rebuilt in the 19th century, in a landscape lightly remodeled by Vilmorin. It is an internationally renowned example of such sensitive approach to historic fabric, as well as an outstanding contribution by France to the architectural heritage of the twentieth century. As such the

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Novartis Headquarters buildings are not only a testimony of their time, but also a lesson in architecture for the creators of today, and considered to be a good example in France of the successful transplantation of contemporary architecture in historically sensitive sites.

As an ingenious collaboration of architects Martin Burckhardt and Bernard Zehrfuss, with the constructive thinking of Jean Prouvé, the Novartis France headquarters complex is arguably one of their most sophisticated achievements, and its design and innovation was influential upon a range of buildings, these architects subsequently developed.

It is our view that the outstanding heritage significance of this complex warrants further efforts by Novartis to adaptively retain these heritage buildings, which are seen as benchmark standards of both modern architecture and outstanding examples of sensitive insertion of new development in an ancient garden

The preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for the precinct, including a thorough examination of the adaptive re-use options of the complex is needed to inform any decision on redevelopment or rehabilitation.

The world looks to France for inspiration in modern architecture and excellence in heritage conservation practice, and especially for adherence to *The Venice Charter* and professional guidelines such as the ICOMOS ISC20C *Madrid Document Approaches for the Conservation of Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage* (Attached) which relates specifically to managing changes to Twentieth century heritage sites.

Beside the potential architectural and heritage loss, the demolition of part of the Novartis Headquarters building would be seen as a sign of departure from the widely acknowledged commitment of France to the protection and long-term conservation of its cultural heritage and historic sites of all periods, be they ancient or modern.

The Heritage Alert process uses the ICOMOS ISC20C's international professional and public networks to investigate local requests for international action when modern heritage sites are threatened, using external experts to assess research and analyse comparative values, in order to achieve a rigorous independent assessment of the situation.

The Heritage Alert review of the Novartis Headquarters was undertaken by ISC20C members from Sweden, South Africa, the USA and Australia, who engaged with local citizens and reviewed the documentary evidence. It has concluded that there would be serious adverse impacts on the Novartis Headquarters precinct and the modern heritage of France should partial demolition proceed.

In cases such as the Novartis headquarters, where the heritage values are well-proven, a Heritage Alert can be used to draw international attention to the threat and to promote better conservation solutions. The Heritage Alert will be uploaded to the ISC20C website and distributed through the networks of ICOMOS; DoCoMo Mo and the International Union of Architects. It will be updated as further information comes to hand, and we would welcome input from Novartis.

As the international president of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage, I urge you as the president of Novartis France and the CEO respectively to pause to



reconsider the current proposal, to eliminate its adverse impacts by retaining and re-using the building and thus demonstrate Novartis's leadership in responsible business practices by resolving appropriate conservation solutions. This would respect the heritage of the site and demonstrate the social responsiveness of the company to national and international concern for the architectural heritage of the twentieth century

The ISC20C urges you to suspend the current proposal as part of Novartis commitment to protecting the environment and to engage in a Conservation Management Plan process to ensure that the heritage significance of the complex as a whole is retained as one of France's landmarks of 20th Century architecture is adaptively re-used and maintained in its historic precinct setting.

Our French representatives would be pleased to have an opportunity to discuss this matter further with you.

Yours faithfully,

Sheridan Burke

President, International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

Attachment

ICOMOS ISC20C Madrid Document Approaches for the Conservation of Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage

Copies to:

M. Patrick Ollier Deputy-Mayor of Rueil-Malmaison

Mme Aurélie Filippetti Ministère de la Culture

Mr Gustavo Araoz, President ICOMOS

Ms Kirsti Kovanen, Secretary General, ICOMOS

Ms Gaia Jungleblodt, ICOMOS Secretariat

M. Pierre Antoine Gatier, President ICOMOS France

Ms Ana Tostões, President, DoCoMo Mo International

M. Albert Dubler, President, International Union of Architects