

## Speaking for Scotland's Buildings

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Glasgow  
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Department of Environmental and  
Regeneration Services  
Glasgow City Council  
231 George Street  
Glasgow G1 1RX

The Chief Planning Officer,

Dear Sir,

**Planning Application Nos: 21/02068/LBA & 21/02069/FUL  
520 Sauchiehall Street**

**Erection of residential development, 87 Units, with Class 1 (Retail), Class 2 (Financial, Professional and Other Services), Class 3 (Food & Drink), Class 4 (Business) and Class 11 (Assembly & Leisure) uses, including demolition of existing building with facade retention and other associated works.**

The Society has considered the applications above and wishes to object strongly to the proposed gap infill development within Glasgow's Central Conservation Area.

### **Conservation Area**

Any development within a Conservation Area should be judged on the extent to which it preserves and/or enhances the character and appearance of that Conservation Area. This does not preclude modern development from Conservation Areas but does require such developments to be mindful of their setting and respond appropriately (scale, massing, materials, etc.)

The present proposal appears to take its cue in terms of scale and massing from Newton House (1968-69) on the opposite side of the street. The Central Conservation Area, however, was created because of "the architectural richness ... derived from the huge range and high-quality of building types and designs from different periods, particularly the late 19th and early 20th centuries", [Central Area Conservation Area Appraisal, p.118. Our underlining.] rather than the anomalous Newton House.

The proposed tower is out of scale with any of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings around it and is, therefore, at odds with the character of the Conservation Area.

### **Listed Buildings**

The site for the proposed development is bordered on both sides by listed buildings: B-listed to the east and A-listed to the west.

Glasgow City Council's Development Plan Policy CDP 9 aims to protect, enhance and preserve "the historic environment for the benefit of existing and future generations" [CDP, SG9, p.6]; this refers not only to Conservation Areas as detailed above but also to the setting of the city's listed buildings.

SG9 goes on to say, "Where a Listed Building forms an important visual element in a street, any development within that street should be considered as being in the setting of the building".

The most prominent listed building in this part of Sauchiehall Street is the A-listed Charing Cross Mansions and Albany Chambers (both by J J Burnet, 1891 & 1896 respectively) immediately adjoining the development site to the west. The lantern steeple or cupola of Charing Cross Mansions is a distinctive landmark, punctuating views into the Conservation Area from the west.

The proposed scale and massing of the new development—at about twice the height—would have a severely detrimental effect on the setting of this iconic A-listed building. It would dominate the skyline and, as a result, diminish the visual status at present enjoyed by Charing Cross Mansions.

To the east are the lower B-listed buildings of the Royal Highland Fusiliers Museum (John Keppie, 1903) and the former Locarno Ballroom (Robert Duncan, 1898). Once again, the proposed development—almost two and a half times the height of these buildings—would dominate the block to the detriment of the listed buildings' setting.

The attempt to include the façade of the B-listed former Vitagraph Cinema (John Fairweather, 1914-15) is particularly unconvincing. While the interior of this building may be beyond saving, a more sympathetic and sensitive approach to the retention of the façade (and of that to the rear on Renfrew Street) should be sought.

### **Proposed Development.**

The proposed tower is to be 14 storeys high (including the ground floor and mezzanine) with minimal setbacks which will do little to ameliorate the effect of the height.

The perspective drawing shows the top floors (anodised aluminium glazed curtain walling) ghosted out as if in a mist; this is presumably an attempt to lessen their visual impact in the drawing, but the built reality will, unfortunately, not benefit from this artistic liberty.

### **Conclusion**

Much has been made in the press of the eco-friendly aspects of the proposed building: it is to be a car-free development, for example. We would welcome a development here that is eco-friendly and sensitive to the heritage of its location.

If the City is to benefit from its Development Plan policies regarding heritage, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (CDP9 & SG9) and Placemaking (CDP1 & SG1) then it must acknowledge that the present proposals do not conform to these policies; rather, they run counter to the policies.

For the lack of respect this development exhibits towards the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and towards the setting of its neighbouring Listed Buildings, it should be refused planning permission.

Yours faithfully,

Iain J. Wotherspoon,  
Chairman, Cases Panel, Strathclyde Group