

Report Title: St Vincent St Office Development, Glasgow
Issue Date: 9th April 2008
Client/Developer: Castlemore
Lead Designer: SMC Hugh Martin Architects / Turley Associates
Local Authority: Glasgow City Council
Location: Glasgow
Planning Ref: 064/03348/DC
Details: Proposals for major office development at 301 St Vincent Street, on the western edge of Glasgow city centre, adjacent to the motorway



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INTRODUCTION

This report relates to a planning application for an office building at the western edge of Glasgow city centre, adjacent to the motorway. Preliminary designs were presented to an A+DS Design Review panel on 23rd October 2007 in Edinburgh, prior to a planning application being submitted. As the designs are substantially unchanged since originally reviewed, the majority of A+DS's views remain as per our restricted report dated 5th November 2007. We note, however, that the project team have responded to some of the comments made by A+DS in a statement that accompanies the application and have updated our report accordingly.

A+DS VIEWS

1. Ambition

1.1 We support the intention to create a high quality landmark building on this unique site. It has the potential to be city imaging, by offering a first impression when approaching from the airport, and there is an opportunity to restate the west edge of, and announce a gateway to, the city centre.

1.2 We believe that the design is not fulfilling its potential, and encourage everyone concerned with the project to be more ambitious.

2. Context and scale

2.1 A number of design considerations resulting from the site's location need to be reconciled and balanced as the development will be perceived at the level of the city and the street; at the transition between the city grid and the curving motorway; and at the edge and entrance to the inner city area.

2.2 The building should convey a presence that is appropriate to the scale of both the city, and to that of the individual at street level or office user. It has not yet been successfully demonstrated how the design actively engages with the motorway, the street, the skyline or surrounding public spaces.

2.3 We do not believe that the present design has fulfilled its potential as a response to city making in this area.

3. Materiality

3.1 We recognise the requirement to create flexible office floorplates; however, we have concerns about the massing and geometry of the building, which appear arbitrary and disjointed, and question the justification for the built form and the angled roofscape.

3.2 The raised height at opposite corners would seem to overshadow the space to the east and minimise the building's impact at the termination of St Vincent Street / entrance to the inner city.

3.3 Although orientating primarily to St Vincent Street, there is a prominent aspect and potential for views to, and natural light from, the south. We support the introduction of, what appears to be, terraces to the elevations to help alleviate the mass of the building. There is scope for the design team to develop this idea further to take advantage of spectacular views, along with vertical gardens that could actively engage with the motorway to the west.

4. Ground level

4.1 We welcome the introduction of a café to assist in activating the ground floor plane. However, we suggest that further work is required to demonstrate how the building interacts with the spaces on all four sides.

4.2 It is not presently clear how public / private space is defined, how people move through and around the building, or how a relationship is formed between the inside and out.

4.3 We recognise the way in which the landscaped space to the east of the building has been developed, though it is unclear how this will be made fully accessible.

5. Process

5.1 The façade design is critical to this project and further information is required to show how the elevations are being developed, and how the building is articulated.

5.2 We trust that design quality will be mandated in the design-and-build procurement route.

5.3 We encourage the project team to achieve an excellent BREEAM rating.

CONCLUSIONS

We support the intention to deliver a high quality building in this location. The designs are substantially unchanged since our original review and therefore many of our previous concerns remain. We do not support the current designs and believe that the proposed building and the surrounding spaces require further development. We encourage a more ambitious approach that considers the development as part of wider city-building.

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