



Case reference	NA-GLW-076
Application details	Mixed use development, including residential units/serviced apartments/student accommodation, hotel, office, retail, food and drink and commercial uses and associated works, with demolition of unlisted buildings and alterations to listed buildings.
Site address	1-3 Martha Street / 63-77 John Street / 40 North Frederick Street / 266-280 George Street, Glasgow
Applicant Determining Authority Local Authority Area	CSG Glasgow Ltd Glasgow City Council
Reason(s) for notification	Objection by Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Representations	3 objections – HES, University of Strathclyde and the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland.
Date notified to Ministers Date of recommendation	5 May 2017 but documents incomplete until 6 June 2017 28 June 2017
Decision / recommendation	Call-in

Description of Proposal and Site:

Planning permission is sought for a mixed use development in central Glasgow. It comprises the adaptation and conversion of two listed buildings to serviced apartments with ground floor commercial space, construction of an 11 storey hotel on the George Street/John Street gap site and construction of a 19 storey student accommodation block on Martha Street/John Street corner with a new public plaza being created at the base. A new east-west lane linking North Frederick Street and John Street would be fronted by ground floor commercial retail, leisure and food and drink uses on the south side. The proposals also require Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the unlisted former Registry Office building on Martha Street and Listed Building Consent for the removal of a series of link corridors stairs and small buildings listed as part of the rear of the A-listed Parish Halls. The 3 storey building to the rear of the Parish Halls would be retained and converted into offices.

EIA Development:

- The proposal fits the description of being 'urban development' under 10(b) of the table in Schedule 2 and, when submitted for screening, included the city block area of 1.15 hectares. On application, the site area was reduced to 0.55 hectares so is above the 0.5ha threshold. The site is not located within a defined sensitive area. Therefore the Council's view that no EIA is required and that the submission

of a suitably robust Design and Access Statement should adequately address any significant environment issues such as visual impact is reasonable.

Consultations and Representations:

- Three objections were received from *i*, Historic Environment Scotland, *ii*, University of Strathclyde and *iii*, the Architectural Heritage Society Of Scotland (AHSS). Issues raised include the impact of the scale, massing and design of the new build student accommodation element and the effect on the City Chambers; the impact of the proposed development height on the amenity of surrounding streets and darkening of street setting and sense of enclosure; design approach reflects a priority for maximisation of development with a lack of regard and consideration of amenity; the height is not justified given predominant scale of the neighbourhood and is unsustainable; the use of brick exterior instead of sandstone; vehicle and cycle parking provision; development being contrary to Council's development plan and design and historic environment policies; and concern over supply outstripping demand for student accommodation and stability of market.

Council Interest

- The site is being disposed of by City Property (Glasgow) LLP, a subsidiary of Glasgow City Council. The sale was approved by their Executive Committee in May 2015. The complex contains seven buildings and were formerly in use as Council offices. They expect to receive a net sum of £5,110,000 exclusive of VAT. At an update to committee, given in February 2016, they expected hotel use to replace the proposed student use on the site and this change responded to the increased number of student accommodation schemes in the city and perception of potential over-supply. This doesn't reflect the uses in the submitted application.

Assessment:

1. The application has been notified because Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have advised against the granting of planning permission. HES welcomes the principle of regenerating the city centre site and developing the gap site but considers the proposed height of the 19 storey block of predominately student accommodation, to be set back from the corner of Martha Street and John Street, will impact on the setting of Glasgow City Chambers, an A-listed building of national importance.
2. HES consider the City Chambers to be Glasgow's most important civic building. The quality and quantity of its architectural detailing, both inside and out, are expressive of Glasgow's wealth, confidence and importance as the 'second city of the Empire' at the end of the 19th century. Its architectural presence at the head of the George Square enhances its character as the City's principal civic space.
3. HES' view is that it is important that the City Chambers retains its prominence unchallenged. The skyline behind and immediately adjacent to it in all views from George Square, and principal views from adjacent streets, is essential to

protecting its setting. They recognise that while there are other tall buildings in the vicinity, the location of these do not compete with the dominant presence of the City Chambers in the same way these current proposals do.

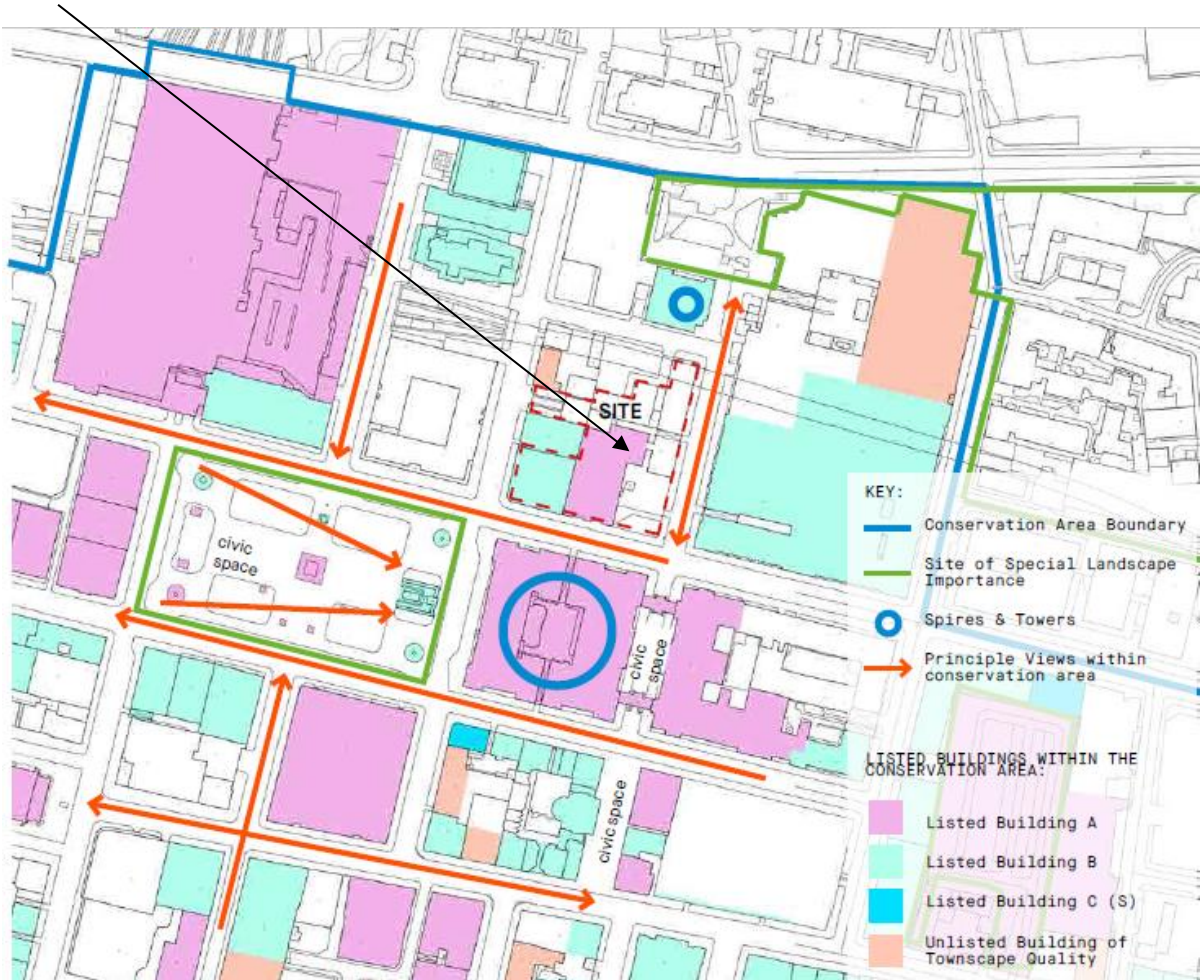
4. HES consider that visualisations submitted show that the height of the proposed student residence would result in it intruding into views to the City Chambers. In views from the west side of George Square in particular, the tower would appear adjacent to or directly behind the domes of the City Chambers where at present they are silhouetted against the sky. They also raise concerns over the impact of the tall building impinging on important views along John Street. The Southern section of John Street comprises a particularly rich and impressive early to mid-19th century streetscape of classical buildings which is terminated by the A-listed Baroque John Street arches and the effect is completed by the east cupolas of the City Chambers which are silhouetted against the sky. (See **Annex 1** for visualisations)
5. HES' early advice to the Council stated it is important for the proposals overall to respect the historic fabric and character of the adjacent listed buildings, the established character of the conservation area and the setting of nearby listed buildings, most significant being the City Chambers.
6. The Council's view is that the scale, massing, design and impact of the proposed 19 storey building is acceptable and has been assessed and found to comply with the relevant policies of the Development Plan. They consider the existing character of this part of the conservation area to be blighted and fragmented, with the overall proposals seeking to repair and re-establish a city block perimeter. The proposals have been assessed against the existing detailed policy criteria and found to respect and preserve the character and special interest of the listed buildings within, and adjacent to, the site.
7. The Council indicates that the policies of the Glasgow City Development Plan (CDP) adopted in March 2017 are a material consideration and with respect to the detailed supplementary guidance of the new plan, relating to design and heritage matters, there is no significant difference between the policies in City Plan 2 and the new CDP.
8. The Council disagrees with HES and the University of Strathclyde over the impact of the 19 storey building. They consider that the level of impact on the City Chambers is being overstated and the building will be visible but its design, form and materials mean it will appear as a respectful addition to the skyline rather than a brash addition demanding the attention of the viewer from the Square. They also indicate that from the vast majority of vantage points within the square, the building would always appear adjacent and subsidiary to the City Chambers and approval of the proposed student accommodation tower does not detract from the impressive townscape that exists around the wider streets.
9. The Council's conclusion, in considering HES objection, is that the proposal will have a minimal impact on the setting of the City Chambers which will remain the pre-eminent architectural set piece within George Square and on the streets surrounding it, in particular John Street.

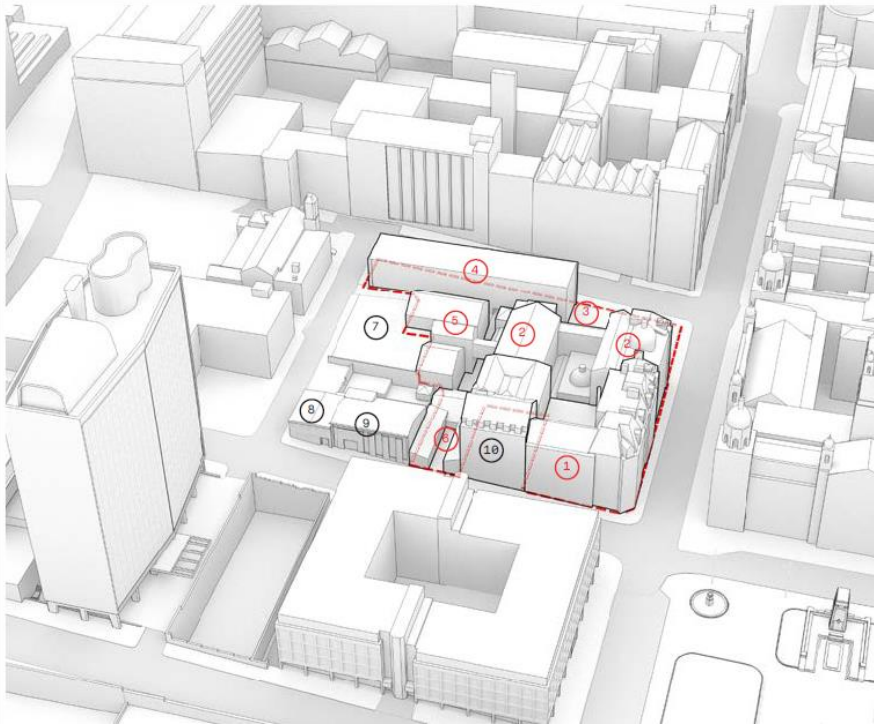
10. The applicant's Heritage Consultant produced an informative Heritage Statement for the listed buildings at 266 and 280 George Street, which sets out the historical background to the whole site and evaluates the proposal against policy and guidance. However, the key issue regarding the impact of the proposals on the setting of listed buildings, on other listed buildings in the vicinity of the site and on the wider conservation area was intentionally not considered in this report. (Part 2 – page 50 – section 5.13)
11. A comprehensive masterplan, context, visual and townscape assessment has been provided with the application. There is no doubt that the overall scheme is a significant regeneration opportunity and will address the vacant and derelict nature of the listed buildings, surrounding property and land while dealing with topographical and urban design challenges and provide a significant capital receipt for the Council.
12. George Square is identified in the Council's Central Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2012) as the city's most significant historic square and is considered the civic heart of the city and is a well-used public park. It is also designated as a site of special landscape importance. The majority of the Southern part of John Street is also identified as civic space as it is pedestrianised. The appraisal also indicates that the City Chambers were rebuilt in George Square at the height of the city's industrial and financial might in 1882–90. The lavish Italian Renaissance style building with its towers, domes, and arches linking to the 1914–23 eastern extension forms almost a miniature city in itself. The appraisal also states "tall buildings have the potential to block important views in, out or across the Conservation Area, to obscure the skyline profile of key buildings, or to introduce an incongruous element in an area of otherwise consistent roof character."
13. The Council has given significant weight to the overall benefits of the development and regeneration of vacant listed buildings, gap sites and renewal of the city block and given less weight to the historic environment issues, especially the impact of the proposed 19 storey building on setting of the City Chambers and the associated civic space of George Square and John Street, adjacent listed buildings and within the wider conservation area.
14. In summary, it is considered that the issues raised by HES and others regarding the impacts of the proposed 19 storey student accommodation block on the setting of the A-listed City Chambers, John Street townscape and surrounding historic environment merit further scrutiny.

Decision/Recommendation:

- On the basis of Historic Environment Scotland's objection, it is considered that this application raises issues of national significance in terms of its potential impact on a range of A-listed buildings and implications for the historic environment. It is therefore recommended that the application be called in for determination by Scottish Ministers.

Annex 1 – Location of 1-3 Martha Street, 63-77 John Street, 40 North Frederick Street and 266-280 George Street, Glasgow



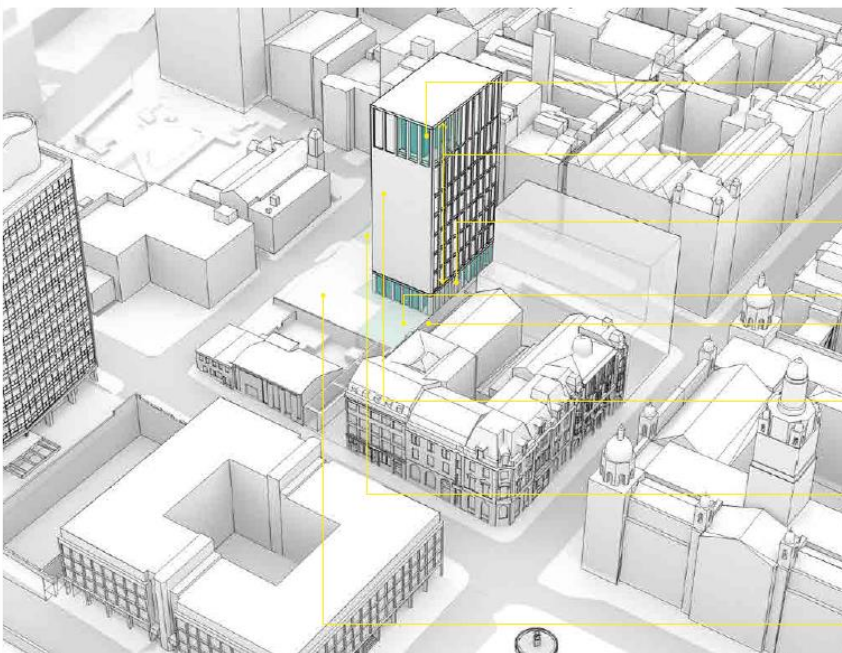


2.3 Existing Buildings

The current configuration of the city block is shown on the diagram opposite, with those parcels of land and existing buildings in the prospective control of the applicant highlighted in red.

1. Former Inland Revenue Building (280 George Street)
2. Former Parish Halls (266 George Street)
3. Gap Site / carpark
4. Former Registry Building (77, 73 John Street)
5. Lane buildings (incl 3 Martha Street)
6. Lane sheds / lean-tos
7. University of Strathclyde car park
8. 48 North Frederick Street
9. The Ark Bar
10. The Old Printworks Hotel

The dashed red line site boundary describes the land in the prospective ownership of the applicant, representing the City Property Glasgow disposal. The block components outwith that parcel are annotated in black.



9.8 Student Residences - summary diagram

loggia

The most public corner in the wider city dialogue - to George Square, Blythswood Hill etc - is celebrated

expanding scale of storey groupings

typical two-storey groupings give way to a three then a three-and-a-half grouping towards the top of the building

lane colonnade

signifies public activity addressing the lane, connects internal publicrooms with the garden terrace and provides sheltered external amenity space

garden terrace

activating lane

below the garden terrace, double height leisure / retail units activate the lane.

gable scale

a heroic scale is established to the gables, establishing a dialogue with the former College of Building and Printing tower, and maximising the impact of the open corner loggia

plaza

new public realm to Martha Street, establishing an arena activated by the university accommodation (student union, former church at Martha and John Streets) and the new student residence, and knitting the north/south John Street route into the east/west route between the station and the University

hard landscaping outwith applicant's control (presently surface carpark)

Photomontages – as existing and as proposed



George Square with the City Chambers and College of Building and Printing – now and with proposed student accommodation.



George Square with the City Chambers and College of Building and Printing – now and with proposed student accommodation within the City Chambers setting.



John Street – now and with proposed student accommodation



George Street and John Street corner gap site – proposed hotel with student accommodation behind



North Frederick Street and Martha Street corner – now and with proposed student accommodation and hotel