



Glasgow City Council

**Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration
City Policy Committee**

Item 5

14th November 2023

**Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director of Neighbourhoods,
Regeneration and Sustainability**

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Progress Report on Tall Buildings Planning Guidance

Purpose of Report:

To inform Committee of progress on the guidance being produced to guide the development of tall buildings in the City Centre.

Recommendations:

Committee are recommended to note the progress made on formulating tall buildings design guidance and next steps, and note intention to return to committee in Spring 2024 for approval for public consultation.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: n/a

consulted: n/a

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to Policy situation.

Development pressure for tall buildings is increasing, due to new forms of residential and other developments, market demand and changes to methods and costs of construction. There is also increasing pressure for repurposing of buildings within the City which may therefore require additional height to accommodate floorspace to make this possible. Within the City Development Plan Supplementary Guidance on [Placemaking SG1 Part 1&2](#) there is guidance on the definition and potential location of tall buildings, together with principles about good design for tall buildings. This guidance is currently used in the determination of planning applications.

1.2 The City Centre Strategic Development Framework ([SDF](#)) adopted in 2021, supports the re-densification and re-population of the City Centre, supporting the City Centre Living Strategy. In its approach to a Sustainable, Liveable City Centre, the SDF recommends that, in order to allow the densification of the City Centre in a sustainable manner at the same time as maintaining the character of the Glasgow Central Conservation Area, further urban design guidance should be prepared. This should include an understanding of the City Centre's townscape qualities, key considerations in its evolution, and elements to be protected and enhanced in order to guide design and development decisions. This approach was reiterated by the [Central District Regeneration Framework](#) and also the [River Clyde Strategic Development Framework \(SDF\)](#) which identified opportunities for increased density and increased height along the river. The Glasgow Central Conservation Area Appraisal also contains important assessment criteria for new development including tall buildings in the Conservation Area.

1.3 As a result of the above policy commitments, the [Council Plan 2022-2027](#) identifies the production of a Tall Buildings Policy for the City Centre (Strategic Plan Grand Challenge 3 Mission 2 Commitment 23). This report provides an update on the progress made on the commitment.

2. Tall Buildings Design Guidance

2.1 Tall buildings are a controversial topic in the field of sustainability. Many argue that they are a beneficial form of urban development, as they can help reduce sprawl, increase density, and provide opportunities for refurbishment and re-use. Others contend that they are inherently unsustainable, as they consume more materials, energy, and resources than lower-rise buildings, and create social and environmental problems.

Glasgow City Council recognises the role taller buildings can play in terms of sustainable and organic growth of the city system, and encourages competent, forward thinking and holistic responses to the challenges of planning, constructing, and maintaining taller buildings.

In short, tall buildings can be sustainable if they are designed and built with care and innovation, and if they are part of a holistic urban planning strategy that balances environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. However, tall buildings are not a panacea for urban sustainability challenges, and they should be complemented by other forms of low and medium-impact development that promote diversity, liveability and inclusive economic growth. The policies of NPF4 in relation to climate emergency and emissions are also of particular relevance.

- 2.2 The Tall Buildings Design Guidance is being prepared by NRS Property and Consultancy Services together with the Planning Service. The guidance will consist initially of locational guidance (map of appropriateness) together with design principles. Buildings of scale play a very important role in the way the city functions and is perceived. However, the guidance will be based on the recognition of scale in relation to context. It will include therefore guidance on what would be described as “taller” buildings as well as very tall metropolitan scale buildings. This guidance offers the opportunity to learn from the experience of other cities as well as Glasgow’s own experience, and to help to generate a coherent city form.
- 2.3 To date Property and Consultancy Services, who Planning have commissioned to carry out this piece of work, have interrogated the existing built form. They have looked at the topography of the city centre, and building heights as existing, including their position on raised parts of the city centre. From this they can categorise areas of the city centre which are lower scale and would be most or least adversely affected by tall or taller buildings. Some images from this draft document illustrating the approach can be seen in Appendix 1. They have also compared approaches taken in other cities towards tall buildings guidance.
- 2.4 This analysis and approach has been subject to internal consultation including through a specially convened gathering hosted by the Glasgow Urban Design Panel including representatives of a number of Glasgow architects, designers and amenity bodies as well as a strong representation of the development industry provided via the Developers Forum of the Chamber of Commerce. This has informed thinking on the location guidance approach and also on the next stage of the design guidance.
- 2.5 The next stage of the design guidance will be to produce technical and visual guidance on principles of the design of tall and taller buildings. This will expand on the principle that not all developments within an area identified as being appropriate for taller buildings can be high risers if specific conditions are not fulfilled.

This guidance will expand on the analytical findings supporting the suitability map and will cover the following factors to be considered to determine the impacts of a tall building (please note: the following list is not exhaustive as this is still work in progress at the time of this report):

- Quality of the city centre: the distinctive qualities and values of this distinctive place including historic character and context;

- Heritage: understanding the significance of the local historic environment and the potential impact on this significance;
- Visual: the impact on the city centre streetscape, and wider urban landscapes, and views of the skyline. This includes the setting of heritage assets;
- Functional: the design, embodied carbon and carbon cost, construction and operation;
- Transport: the impact on the local transport infrastructure and particularly public transport needs.
- Quality of the lighting: the contribution to the night-time appearance of the City Centre including the skyline when viewing the City Centre from a distance.
- Environmental: the influence on local micro-climates such as creation of wind tunnels, canyon effect, distances between tall buildings, over-shadowing, glare, and air quality and effect on heritage assets in terms of the impact these micro-climatic changes could have upon their fabric, and how they are experienced; and
- Cumulative: the combined impacts on heritage assets from existing, consented and proposed tall buildings.

2.6 This guidance will provide a definition of what is tall, based on evidence of the local context, and a minimum height threshold for the policy to be applied will be considered.

2.7 The guidance will then be brought to this Committee and City Administration Committee for discussion and agreement to issue for external consultation, with a view to approval by the Council and use in determination of planning applications. As an elaboration of the existing guidance within the Development Plan, this design guidance provides an addition to the design guidance already in Supplementary Guidance SG1 Placemaking. The Guidance has also been produced as an output from the City Centre Strategic Development Framework and thus also falls within the ambit of City Development Plan SG2 Sustainable Spatial Strategy. As such the Design Guidance will have weight in informing decisions on planning applications.

3. Next Steps

3.1 The two stages of the design guidance (locational and design principles) will be produced for consideration by this committee in the Spring 2024. Thereafter wider consultation will take place with a view to formal approval in the summer.

4. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	Funding for this study from Planning City Centre funding.
<i>Legal:</i>	None
<i>Personnel:</i>	None
<i>Procurement:</i>	GCC Property and Consultancy Services have been procured to produce this guidance

Council Strategic Plan: GC3 Fight the climate emergency in a just transition to a net zero; Glasgow M2 become a net zero carbon city by 2030; Commitment 23 Refine Tall Buildings Planning guidance.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify. Yes. The Guidance seeks to promote an ethos of placemaking that improves the lives of all citizens in line with the aims of the City Development Plan. An EQIA Screening Report was prepared for the City Development Plan in 2017 and no significant negative impacts were identified.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report? No significant impact

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage. No significant impact.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify: Yes: become a net zero City by 2030

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

Tall buildings can be sustainable if they are designed and built with care and innovation, and if they are part of a holistic urban planning strategy that balances environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. They can contribute positively to climate impacts of development if well designed.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

Sustainability is part of the consideration of whether a tall building is acceptable through NPF4 Policy 1.

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

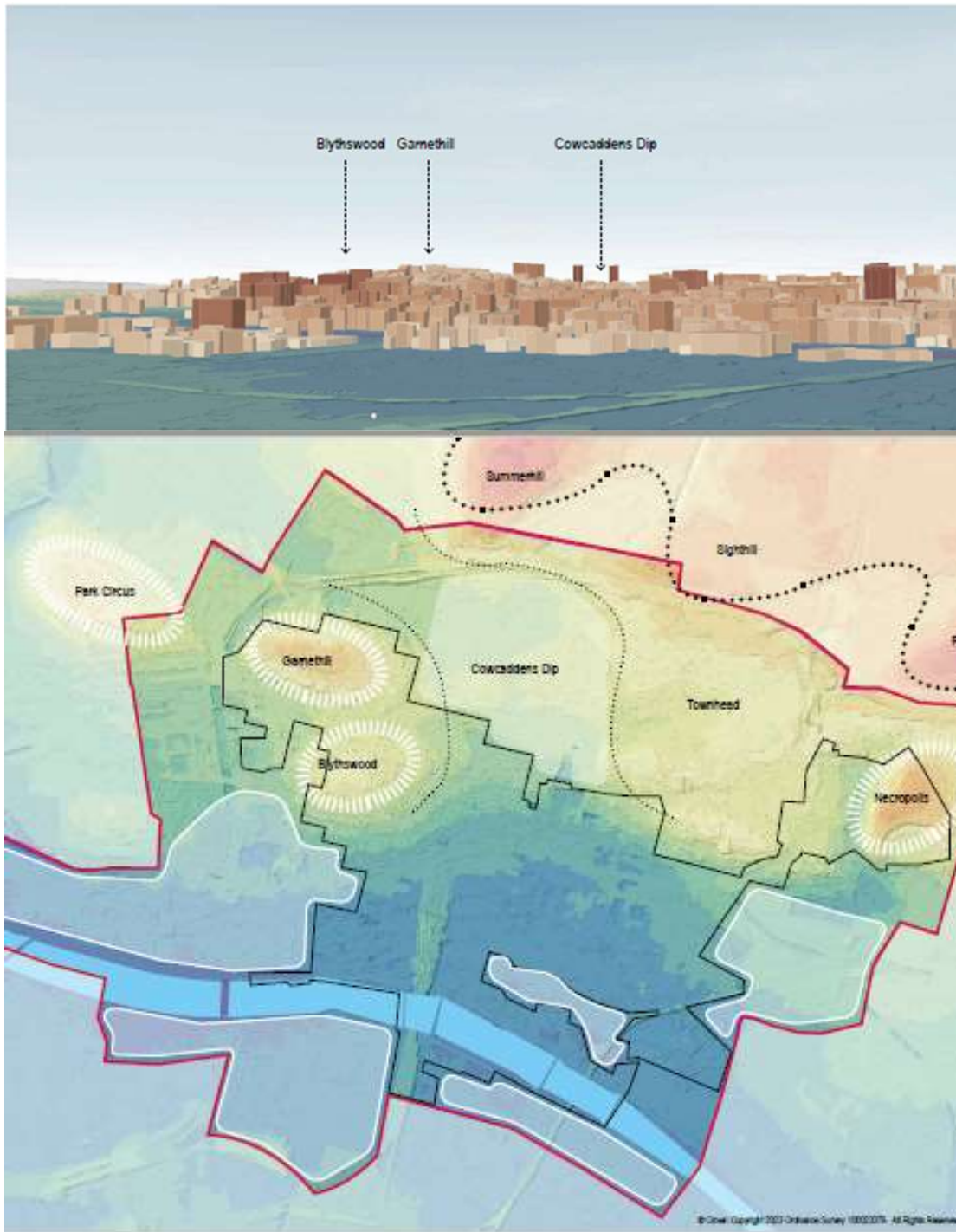
Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report
No

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out n/a

5. Recommendations

Committee are recommended to note the progress made on formulating tall buildings design guidance and next steps, and note intention to return to committee in Spring 2024 for approval for public consultation.

APPENDIX 1 IMAGES FROM DRAFT GUIDANCE



Please note: the above images are extracted by the documents WIP and only indicative.