



Glasgow City Council

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

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

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Item 3

4th June 2024

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:

It is recommended that committee:- notes the progress made on formulating tall buildings design guidance and next steps, and note the intention to put this guidance out for public consultation. Thereafter the final document (as modified) will be brought back to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee to note and the intention to then proceed to City Administration Committee for approval.

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).
- 1.4 The resultant design guidance will, once approved, have material weight in consideration of development within the City. This report provides an update on the progress made on the commitment, includes a draft of the Guidance, and a note about further consultation.

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 has been prepared by NRS Property and Consultancy Services together with the Planning service. The guidance consists 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 has taken the opportunity to learn from the experience of other cities as well as Glasgow’s own experience, to help to generate a coherent city form.
- 2.3 To date we have interrogated the existing built form, looking at the topography of the city centre, and building heights as existing, including their position on raised parts of the city centre. From this the guidance categorises areas of the city centre which are lower scale and would be most or least adversely affected by tall or taller buildings.
- 2.4 The phase 1 locational guidance is finalised and PCS have produced technical and visual guidance on principles of the design of tall and taller buildings as part of phase 2. This expands 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 expands on the analytical findings supporting the suitability map and covers the following factors to determine the impacts of a tall building (please note: the following list is not exhaustive):

- 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;
- Environmental: the influence on local micro-climates such as creation of wind tunnels, canyon effect, distances between tall buildings, over-shadowing, and effect on heritage assets in terms of the impact these micro-climatic changes could have upon their fabric, and how they are experienced;
- Cumulative: the combined impacts on heritage assets from existing, consented and proposed tall buildings.

2.5 In support of the phase 2 work on design principles, a technical addendum produced by ARUP will cover four topics; whole life carbon, smart buildings, daylight and sunlight conditions within the building and on due context, and wind microclimate assessment. Each topic will introduce the subject and specific nuances associated with tall buildings, outline the industry best-practice for undertaking assessments, describe how results should be presented to drive consistency for GCC, and cross-reference relevant existing guidance and literature on the subject matter to aid with the assessment. This work is still ongoing.

3. Consultation

3.1 This analysis and approach has been subject to internal consultation including through a specially convened gathering hosted by the Glasgow Urban Design Panel. This included 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 locational guidance approach and also on the subsequent stage of the design guidance.

3.2 A follow up consultation took place in March to bring the design principles phase to the Glasgow Urban Design Panel. Like the previous session the panel included 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. The session was used to outline the design principles but focus primarily on

discussion points around some of the more challenging aspects of the emerging design guidance. This session was well received.

3.3 On 8th February, the draft guidance (Phase 1) was also presented to the Joint Action Group of Ward 10 community councils.

3.4 A digital round table workshop has taken place on the 23rd May to facilitate a discussion among UK and international professional and academic experts with previous expertise in producing tall buildings design guidance for similar scale cities to Glasgow. This session sought constructive criticism, widening the debate and assessed new perspectives. It was used to gain advice on the approach other cities have taken and understand some of the implications, both foreseen and unforeseen, that have emerged from similar published tall buildings guidance.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Following discussion at this Committee, wider public consultation will take place. Thereafter the final document (as modified and with updated application process), with a summary of the consultation process and where we have made any changes, will be brought back to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee to note contents and the intention to then proceed to City Administration Committee for approval. Subsequently to be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4.2 It is recognised that the summer holidays are approaching and as such it is proposed that the consultation period is extended on this occasion to 12 weeks in order to maximise opportunity to engage in the process and also maintain momentum to seek to expedite completion of this guidance.

5. Draft Document Links

5.1 Full page document –

[Tall Building Design Guide -20th MAY 2024 - \[DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL\] \[PAGES\].pdf](#)

Double page document for print –

[Tall Building Design Guide -20th MAY 2024 - \[DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL\] \[SPREADS\].pdf](#)

6. 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.
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Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i>	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.
<i>What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?</i>	No significant impact
<i>Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.</i>	No significant impact.

Climate Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:</i>	Yes: become a net zero City by 2030
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<i>What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?</i>	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.
<i>Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?</i>	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
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7. Recommendations

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