



Glasgow City Council

City Administration Committee

Item 1

20th November 2025

Report by Councillor Ruairi Kelly, City Convener for Housing, Development, Built Heritage and Land Use

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ALBERT CROSS TENEMENT DESIGN CONTEST

Purpose of Report:

To seek Committee approval to progress a Tenement Design Contest for redevelopment at Albert Cross in East Pollokshields.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report; and
2. Approve the proposed Tenement Design Contest for redevelopment at Albert Cross in East Pollokshields.

Ward No(s): 6

Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No **X** consulted: Yes ☐ No **X**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Following major fires in 2019 and 2020 two prominent buildings at the core of Albert Drive town centre (Albert Cross) were lost. This resulted in a significant impact to part of the city's built heritage (within the East Pollokshields Conservation Area) alongside the loss of a number of businesses and homes. Against a national and local policy backdrop in support of local town centres and local living, and for safeguarding city heritage, the redevelopment of these sites is a priority.
- 1.2. With the mix of ownership and high development costs it is unlikely that the two sites will be redeveloped in the short to medium term without direct intervention by the City Council. This will prolong the detrimental impact the gap sites are having on the area, while also depriving the community of much needed homes and businesses.
- 1.3. In seeking to progress a positive outcome it is proposed that Council progress with acquisition of the two sites (voluntarily or by Compulsory Purchase), and in parallel run a design contest to instigate development that complements the town centre and is in sympathy with its historic setting. This contest could be carried out by the Council in collaboration with a partner organisation such as the Glasgow Institute of Architects to enable a design-led approach to this complex site.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The [South Central Local Development Framework](#), (LDF) was adopted in September 2023 as Supplementary Guidance to the City Development Plan and forms a framework for the regeneration of the area. One of the key themes of the LDF is investment in local Town Centres to promote a thriving and vibrant South Central. Specifically, the LDF identifies Albert Drive as an important Local Town Centre for which a Town Centre Action Plan should be developed to promote investment in and regeneration of this key asset to best serve the needs of the local community.
- 2.2 To direct this process and in response to the impact of the fires, the Pollokshields Renaissance group was established, chaired by Baillie Macleod and Councillor Molyneux and attended by other local elected members, relevant Council staff and key external stakeholders. The key focus of this group has been addressing the impact of the two fires and developing an agreed approach to the restoration of this key part of the local Town Centre on Albert Drive. The proposed approach outlined in this report is in line with the objectives of the Renaissance group.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 In tandem with the acquisition process it is proposed that a Design Contest will be progressed in line with full details on its delivery as outlined in Appendix 1 attached.
- 3.2 Approval is as such sought from the Committee to progress this Design Contest with a partner organisation (such as the GIA) to enable the design and in turn high quality redevelopment of the two gap sites at Albert Cross. The proposed acquisition will be subject of a separate report in due course.

4. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: Costs incurred through the Design Contest process will be met from within existing resources

Legal: All transactions will be subject to review and conclusion by Glasgow City Council's Corporate and Property Law section and any external resources they may require.

Personnel: There are no direct personnel issues.

Procurement: Any procurement will be in line with Council procedures and policy.

Council Strategic Plan: Grand Challenge 2 – Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens.

- Mission 1: Support Glasgow residents into sustainable and fair work.
 - Focus dedicated support to increase the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic-led businesses, and women-led businesses in the city.

Grand Challenge 3 – Fight the climate emergency in a just transition to a net zero Glasgow.

- Mission 2: Become a net zero carbon city by 2030.

- Deliver place-based interventions and key local regeneration projects.

Grand Challenge 4 – Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities.

- Mission 1: Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods.
 - Deliver around 6,500 new affordable homes for the city meeting the needs of social housing, accessibility and sustainability needs, and the needs of people including larger and multi-generational households.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.

Yes, the proposal seeks to deliver on an ethos of placemaking that improves the lives of local communities (predominantly Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic - BAME) in line with the aims of the City Development Plan and South Central LDF.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

The proposal aims to have a positive impact on equalities by reducing blight and re-instating a valuable asset in a town centre, and potentially expanding the access to facilities and services that meet the needs of local populations, especially the prominent BAME community in the area.

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

This proposal seeks to advance inclusive economic growth and improve access to housing, services and employment opportunities in an area of multiple deprivation in the city, as informed by SIMD2020.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

Yes, the proposal supports in particular Action 56 - Reduce the need to own and use a car, and delivering on the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods by facilitating the

redevelopment of a key gap site in a local town center that serves the local community and is easily accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport.

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

The proposal will reduce our carbon footprint by promoting the re-use of brownfield land and the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods to ensure that people have access to the facilities and services that they need within walking distance in their local neighbourhoods, thus reducing the need to travel and minimising the impact on the environment.

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

Yes – Assessment of contribution to achieving net zero will be a key criteria

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are *there* any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report
Y/N

No

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report; and
2. Approve the proposed Tenement Design Contest for redevelopment at Albert Cross in East Pollokshields.

Appendix 1: Background and Design Contest Criteria

Albert Drive Local Town Centre - Albert Drive is a Local Town Centre located in the heart of East Pollokshields, running east-west along Albert Drive between Shields Road and Darnley Street. It was designed as a commercial town centre comprising of traditional sandstone tenements with retail and commercial units on the ground floor and exists in a mostly unchanged form since its formation pre-1919. The area falls within the East Pollokshields Conservation Area. The town centre serves the needs of the surrounding communities and has developed a specialised role which is focussed on serving the local Asian community (though not exclusively). Recent surveys have indicated an 86% occupancy rate, which is average for Scottish high streets, with none of the vacancies being long term (over 12 months).



Figure 1: Albert Drive Local town Centre. Gap sites following fire highlighted in red dots.

Fire and demolition - The core of the town centre, Albert Cross (Albert Drive and Kenmure Street) has been severely impacted by two fires (November 2019 and April 2020) leading to the loss of two prominent listed buildings at the cross (marked in red in Figure 1).



Figure 2: Albert Cross before and after the two fires.

Prior to the fires, the two pre 1919 tenement properties consisted of flats on the upper two storeys and thriving commercial premises on the ground floor on Albert Drive / Kenmure Street elevations (8 flats and 7 commercial properties across the two buildings). Both buildings had an elaborate design with an articulated corner bay topped with a turret that corresponded with their prominent location.

The loss of the two buildings is significant not only from the perspective of the town centre and the communities that rely on it but also from the perspective of the wider city in terms of the loss of a significant piece of architectural heritage.

Since the fires, the two sites have been lying vacant. Over the years the gap site at 187-193 Albert Drive, 159 Kenmure Street, has become overgrown and the hoarding around it has become dilapidated, having weathered several storms. Local community groups have made several efforts to improve the perimeter of the site but the poor condition of the hoarding, which is the responsibility of the owners, has now made it quite difficult. The site at the opposite corner, which, until recently, had the fire damaged building, has also been in a state of disrepair for the past five years with a wire fence closing off the surrounding pavements for safety.

Details of the two sites

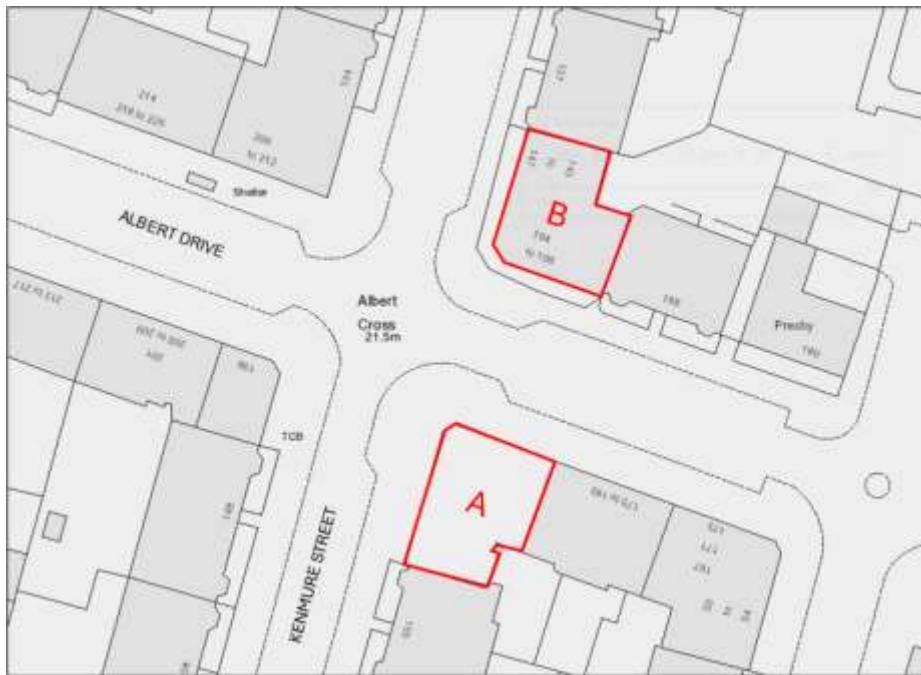


Figure 3: Location of the two fire-affected sites at Albert Cross.

Property A

Former Address: 187-193 (odd No) Albert Drive, 159 Kenmure Street

Designation: Category B listed and within East Pollokshields Conservation Area

Brief description: Site of a former 3-storey and attic corner tenement with a commercial ground floor. Subject of major fire damage on 10th November 2019 and demolished shortly thereafter. Site made safe and gables of the adjacent tenements secured. This building was subject of a common building insurance policy.

Use of building: 3 commercial properties on the ground floor and 4 residential properties on the floors above.



Figure 4: In 2017, prior to the fire, the building (property A) hosted three thriving businesses on the ground floor, including a corner grocery shop, with residences above.



Figure 5: In 2025, six years since demolition in 2019 the site remains undeveloped and overgrown.

Property B

Address: 143- 147 Kenmure Street, 194-198 Albert Drive

Designation: Category B listed and within East Pollokshields Conservation Area

Brief description: Site of a former 3-storey and attic corner tenement with a commercial ground floor. Subject of major fire damage on 10th April 2020, destroying the roof structure and internal flats, but external walls remained standing. Demolished in July 2025, following partial collapse of the remaining structure. Work to secure the gables of the adjacent tenements pending. This building had no common building insurance policy.

Use of building: 4 commercial properties on the ground floor and 4 residential properties on the floors above.



Figure 6: In 2017, prior to the fire, the building hosted four thriving businesses on the ground floor, including a pharmacy, with residences above.



Figure 7: In 2025, post demolition, another big gap within the town centre

Impacts and need for regeneration: The fires and subsequent demolition of two prominent buildings at the core of the Albert Street town centre have had a detrimental effect on the area. Some key impacts include:

- the loss of vital businesses that served the surrounding communities,
- the loss of town centre residences,
- the loss of an important piece of architectural heritage within the historic setting of the area and
- the detrimental impact of the current state of the two sites on the local amenity of the town centre and perception of the place.

Efforts to redevelop the sites in a timely and appropriate manner are key to overcoming some of these impacts.

Policy Context

Safeguarding the function and quality of local town centres and improving their resilience, especially in the current changing economic landscape, is key to delivering our commitments towards sustainable living and reducing our carbon footprint, and in line with the principles of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, as envisioned by the National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4).

Glasgow's inner neighbourhoods benefit from a network of local centres that are rich in both function and historic built form. The City Development Plan and NPF4 both place a key emphasis on their protection and revitalisation. This is reflected through policies that are directed towards the protection and improvement of their distinctiveness and quality of the physical environment, and towards safeguarding their role and function as the preferred location for retail, commercial, leisure and complementary uses in line with the 'Town Centre First' principle. This approach is further built upon in the South Central Local Development Framework which has been adopted as Supplementary Guidance to the adopted Development Plan.

Way forward - Council Stewardship

Due to the two buildings being in private multiple ownership, it has become apparent that without council intervention, the redevelopment of the two gap sites is unlikely, especially in the short to medium term.

An overview of the current status of the two sites is presented below.

Site A - 187-193 (odd No) Albert Drive, 159 Kenmure Street

- Prior to the fires, the site hosted 3 businesses and 4 residential flats, with a total of 7 individual owners.
- The building was insured and following the fire, the relevant insurers have paid any amounts due and are no longer involved. There are no monies

outstanding to Building Standards in terms of demolition costs or other costs incurred in stabilising the site.

- The Council (NRS Housing Services) have established contact with all owners. So far owners have shown no signs of taking forward the redevelopment of the site.

Site B - 143- 147 Kenmure Street, 194-198 Albert Drive

- Prior to the fires, the site hosted 4 businesses and 4 residential flats, with a total of 7 individual owners (1 person owns a flat and commercial unit).
- The Council (NRS Housing Services) have established contact with all owners.
- The building did not have block insurance, hence demolition and clearance costs have currently been borne by GCC Building Standards.
- Repair works are further required to the exposed party walls of the adjoining buildings at 137 Kenmure Street and 188 Albert Drive.
- Owners have indicated they are not in a position to take forward redevelopment of the site and are inclined to release their interest in the properties.

Without a clear plan and proposal for redevelopment, it is feared that the gap sites will remain boarded up and overgrown, much to the detriment of the environment and function of the town centre and surrounding areas.

To address this, timely acquisition of the two sites (voluntary or CPO) and disposal to a preferred developer by the Council is considered as a key and necessary step to facilitate their redevelopment.

Albert Cross Tenement Design Contest

To ensure that the prominent corners at Albert Cross can be redeveloped and reinstated in a way that reflects their former high-quality built form and function, while also being sympathetic to each other, a tenement design contest is proposed.

Key aims and objectives: The key aims of this design contest are outlined below:

- Develop a framework for the redevelopment of the two gap sites.
- Ensure high quality designs that show an understanding of, and sensitivity to, the character and high-quality heritage setting of the Albert Drive Town Centre, are fitting in both form and use, and aim to restore and enhance the vibrancy and urban quality of the area.
- Ensure designs for both sites are complimentary to each other and respond to the prominence of the location of Albert Cross at the heart of the Town Centre.
- Offer a fresh, innovative template for the development of sites within tenemental areas that are sympathetic to the heritage settings but also perform affirm sustainability values from design through to operations and use.

Key design considerations:

- Limited site area/ footprint
- Planning constraints due to conservation area status
- Alignment with the land use and urban form of the Town Centre – tenemental building design with commercial/active uses on the ground floor and residential above.
- Alignment with the design brief.

Proposed approach

A partner organisation such as Glasgow Institute of Architects (TBC) will be invited to administer this contest. The contest will further be informed by a brief being developed by Planning to ensure any design is in line with national and local policies and is sympathetic to the location and historic setting in both design and function.

The Albert Cross Tenement Design Contest will be in the form of an open call for Glasgow architectural design teams to create an exceptional proposal for the redevelopment of two prominent sites in the historic Albert Drive Town Centre in East Pollokshields, falling within East Pollokshields Conservation Area.

Specific Eligibility and evaluation criteria will be set for the contest to ensure it can deliver on the aims and objectives summarised in section 5.1.

Structure & Process: The tenement design contest is being envisioned as a multi-stage process. A brief overview of the same is presented in the graphic and description below.



- **Stage 1 - Expression of interest stage**

Design teams are invited to present their approach to the project with reference to their experience and design brief. No detailed design or substantive work is required at this stage.

- **Stage 2 – Shortlisting**

Following a shortlisting process, three teams are awarded an honorarium of up to £10,000 to develop and submit realizable and costed proposals which would be commensurate with RIBA Stage 1.

- **Gate check**

A gate check is proposed after Stage 2 to assess the progress of Council-led acquisition of the two sites (Voluntary or CPO). If acquisition is going ahead, we proceed to Stage 3.

- **Stage 3 – Developer engagement**

Shortlisted teams per Stage 2 are invited to present their proposals and a developer team to take them forward. Evaluation of this stage is done based on quality of design and deliverability.

- **Stage 4 – Detailed Design**

Selected team is then invited to develop proposals to RIBA stage 3 with a budget for fees of up to £65,600 (taken as 35% of estimated fees of 6% of £3.6m build cost on both sites - £10,000 Stage 2 spend).

Jury composition: To ensure the proposals deliver on design, deliverability, best value, community aspirations, and other criteria, a multi-disciplinary judging panel is proposed for the design contest. This could comprise of design experts (GIA), heritage experts (GCHT), planning and development management officers (GCC planning), elected representatives and representatives from the local community (Community Council).

Financial considerations

The redevelopment of the two sites and reinstatement of the cross is a complex undertaking due to the constraints of both sites in terms of size and location, having to negotiate with multiple private owners, and securing the sites and necessary funding.

Some key cost considerations for the proposed way forward (acquisition & design contest) are outlined below:

- Cost of demolition works, and site clearance incurred by GCC NRS Building Standards (Roughly £100K).
- Cost of securing the party walls of neighbouring properties and recharging of costs (estimated currently at approximately £300K).
- Costs for site valuations (TBC).
- Costs for acquiring sites via CPO, or by voluntary agreement (TBC).
- Costs of developing and delivering the design contest, along with costs for funding detailed designs (TBC, to include funding to partner organisation for administering the design contest).
- Deficit funding will potentially be needed to fulfil the requirement of having active commercial frontages on the ground floor in line with the town centre setting. Current valuation indicates development (sales) value of £1.725m with shops on ground floor. The cost of developing either site is likely to exceed these figures.

Benefits, risks, and any assumptions

Key benefits, risks and assumptions of this proposal are summarised below:

Benefits

- Boost to the local community and town centre in terms of removing blight and bringing new businesses and housing to the area.
- Stitching back of the urban fabric of the town centre.
- Delivering development that is high quality and sympathetic to the historic form of the town centre, in line with the conservation area setting.

Risks

- There is a financial risk to the Council in supporting development that has a likely funding deficit and thus Council having to meet the 'gap' as a result of the costs associated with this development (as summarised in section 6) that are estimated to be higher than current valuation of completed development (sales). There is also a risk that this funding gap could increase with the Council then expected to access additional funding than envisaged at the outset.
- There is a potential risk in Council being perceived as incentivising undesirable owner behaviour/ inadequate insurance coverage through this project and setting a precedent for future. There is a need to therefore sufficiently establish and clarify the uniqueness of this situation and that this is a one-off initiative and not a model for redevelopment.
- The design contest receives a low response and/or we are unable to find a suitable/ interested developer to develop the two sites.

Assumptions

- It is assumed that the proposition will attract developer interest.
- It is assumed that there is sufficient demand for both commercial use (shops) and housing in the area.