Glasgow Urban Design Panel **10th July 2008**

Proposal:	**Proposed Mixed Use Development comprising hotel and ground floor retail/community facilities**
Status:	Pre-Application
Client:	Logan Construction Management Ltd
Agent:	Karakusevic Carson Architects
Address:	Dobbies Loan/North Hanover Street
Presented by:	Ian Carson, Karakusevic Carson Architects

The panel thanked the architects for the presentation of their proposal for the mixed used development and welcomed the opportunity to comment on the project pre-application. The Panel would also like to thank the architects for the handout that had been produced.

Practice Background: The architects provided a brief description of their previous work. This focused on development opportunities for under-utilised urban land, primarily in the air space above transport zones such as car parks or train stations within London and Glasgow.

Existing Context: The architects described Dobbies Loan, Townhead. This important part of the city sits to the North of George Square in close proximity to the city centre, yet seems forgotten and underused. Educational establishments such as Caledonian University and the University of Strathclyde are within close proximity. Also, Buchanan Bus Station and Queen Street Station transport interchanges are nearby. The architects considered this area of the city to be the 'missing link' between George Square and the M8 to which the streetscapes and existing sites could be greatly improved.

The Panel agreed that the Townhead area was physically disconnected from the city centre. The Panel welcomed the architect's analysis and understanding of the area. The Panel appreciates that new buildings can act as catalysts for change. However, the Panel notes that one building cannot solve the inherent traffic, social and development problems within the area and suggests that GCC Planning Department consider and take a view on the longer term development plans for the area and how the proposed building might sit within that context.

Existing Site*:* The architects described the existing site as a crossroads between a series of varying uses – Townhead residential district, Caledonian University Campus/student accommodation and industrial zone to the North. The site therefore appeared as an 'island' surrounded by roads.

Building Use: The architects proposed that the new building would consist of retail uses at ground level with a new hotel above. The retail units were to be conceived as kiosks similar to those at Waverly/Central Stations and provide an outdoor quality at ground floor.

The Panel considered a Hotel with ground floor retail use to be an appropriate use of the site. The Panel welcomed the potential multi-use nature of the development. However it was noted that benefits to the wider surrounding community should be taken into consideration, most particularly Townhead residents. The architect highlighted that their client wished to engage with the surrounding local communities to ensure the new building could be as accessible as possible and support and reinforce a multi-use approach towards the site.

Massing/Orientation: The architects proposed that a lozenge shaped wedge building be formed with views back towards the city framed by large 'city windows'.

The Panel welcomed the bold building form and the interesting cross section that had been produced. The height of the building was seen to be appropriate in cross section but longer elevations may be at risk of appearing rather squat and square in comparison. The Panel suggests that the massing be further investigated in elevational/sectional terms before full comment could be made relative to massing.

Site Strategy/Access: The architects proposed that vehicular drop off and parking be introduced to the east of the building by the Townhead residential access road. Pedestrian access could then filter into the building though the ground floor retail area from Dobbies Loan and North Hanover Street.

The Panel considered the vehicular access to be located at an appropriate edge of the site. The Panel raised some concerns regarding the nature of the ground floor retail/entrance area. 3-D images indicated an open ground floor with cantilevered building mass above. The Panel questioned the level of enclosure that would be provided. The Architects confirmed that the ground floor would be enclosed in some way but with clear visibility throughout. The Panel suggested that the balance between permeability and security should be carefully considered. There was also the danger that the building could be impenetrable for local residents and overly security controlled if not designed sensitively.

Sustainable Strategy: The architects highlighted that the client wished to achieve a zero carbon rating for the new building and set an example for any new developments in the area. The building was also centred around a glazed atrium which was to be naturally ventilated.

The Panel welcomed the consideration towards carbon emissions as this early stage in the project and hoped this ambition could be delivered as the project developed.

Elevational treatment: The architects noted that the project was still in the very early stages of development. The elevational treatment and potential materials had therefore not developed in detail. The architects did however note that they were investigating the use of factory produced sandwich panels made from wood off-cuts.

The Panel welcomed the investigation into recycled products but could made no specific comments regarding the elevational treatment due to the early nature of the project. The Panel did however welcome sight of the initial concept sketches which evoked a striking and bold aesthetic quality.

Conclusion:
The Panel supports the proposal in principle on the basis that the following issues be further considered and addressed:

1. GCC Planning Department to consider and take a view on the mid/long-term development plans for the area and how the proposed building might sit within that context.
2. Further development of building form and massing relative to immediate surroundings
3. Balance between permeability and security to ground floor
4. Commitment to a sustainable agenda
5. Commitment to local consultation to ensure positive engagement and mutli-use within the building.