Glasgow Urban Design Panel **29th May 2008**

Proposal:	**Proposed Housing Development**
Status:	Pre-Application
Agent:	Elder and Canon Architects
Address:	Rally Service Station Site, Great Western Road
Presented by:	Tom Connelly, Elder and Canon Architects

The panel thanked the architects for the presentation of their proposal for the new housing/retail development and welcomed the handout that had been produced.

Existing Site: The architects described the vacant, corner site at the junction between Montague Street and Great Western Road. The site was within close proximity to the River Kelvin and within the Woodside Conservation Area. The architects presented a series of historical maps highlighting that a church had originally sat on the site but had been replaced by the recently demolished Rally Service Station. The surrounding buildings were principally 4-storey tenemental blocks punctuated at intervals by vertical church spires. The architects highlighted that the proposed site faced North to Great Western Road and West to Montague Street. There were also some windows to exiting tenement gables that required consideration.

Building Use: The architects reported that the project was predominantly residential with a 2-storey retail unit to the ground floor at Great Western Road. The architect noted that a financial appraisal had identified that a minimum of 50 units were required on the site. These were to be predominantly 1-bed flats with larger units to the upper storeys.

The Panel considered a residential building with retail below to be an appropriate use of the site.
The Panel did question the extent of proposed 1-bed housing, most particularly with regards to limited lighting that might be provided through the chosen building arrangement (refer to Massing/Orientation).

Site Strategy/Access: The architects proposed that a 7-storey corner building be provided. This would act as an extension to the existing tenemental blocks with a civic, retail element at street level. The building was arranged as an L-shaped block, accessed via a communal stair/lift core from Montague Street, with deck/galley access to the rear. Vehicular access was to be provided from Montague Street. Rear, vehicular parking was to be accommodated at ground level below an enhanced landscaped amenity deck.

The Panel considered the site arrangement to be an appropriate response to the site and welcomed the consideration that had been paid towards the existing context.
The Panel raised some concerns regarding the introduction of deck/galley access within a predominantly tenemental area. The architects noted that there were some successful, local examples i.e. the Connel Building in Hope Street.
The Panel accepted the galley access in principle but suggested that the quality of the access deck would be critical to its success and that enhanced security provision should be provided to entrances at Montague Street to mitigate security problems.
The Panel also highlighted that an enhanced, planted amenity deck would be a costly element to provide. The proposed landscaping should therefore be further demonstrated for this to considered as a convincing external amenity space.

Massing/Orientation:

The architects highlighted that the 7-storey block had been articulated in such a way as to express the commercial shop unit at ground level, a strong band of 4 storeys residential flats above, with 2 stepped upper storeys at roof level. Living spaces overlooked main roads with bedrooms to the rear courtyard.

The Panel welcomed the clear articulation and approach to massing in principle. The new building sat comfortably within its context and related well to surrounding building lines. However, the Panel considered the roofscape to be overly rigorous and pedestrian. It was suggested that the upper storeys should be more animated. The orientation of principle living spaces towards the streets was welcomed. However, the Panel suggested that the building orientation and depth of plan created limited external openings, overshadowed by balconies to the West and access deck to the rear.

Elevational treatment: The architects wished to provide calm and ordered street façades to reflect the repetition and rigour of the surrounding tenements. Ashlar stone cladding with precast strong courses would be provided to main street facades with lightweight timber panels to the courtyard. Projecting bay windows were provided along west-facing Montague Street.

The Panel welcomed the rigorous and restrained elevational approach in principle but considered the articulation of elements to be overly reserved with the risk of appearing banal. The Panel suggested that the project could be more ambitious in its approach to proportion and articulation of elements i.e. more in line with precedents shown within the presentation, for example Silvermills Development in Edinburgh.
The Panel questioned full storey glazing to the entire length of the shop unit at Great Western Road. The glazed corner to Montague Street/Great Western Road was considered visually weak in relation to the heavy, masonry mass above. The Panel suggested that the shop front be revisited to address the corner in some way and provide greater articulation to the shop entrance.

Conclusion:

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

1. Further development of amenity deck with regards to layout and landscaping
2. Enhanced security to be provided to vehicular and pedestrian access
3. Review of upper storeys to provide a more animated roofscape
4. Review of internal lighting levels to principle living areas below balconies
5. Further investigation of proportion and detailing to principle elevations
6. Greater articulation within shop front to define the entrance and provide visual support to massing above.