

Design Review:  
**Beetham  
Hilton  
Tower**

# Designed by Simpson Haugh Architects

**Manchester**  
28 May 2013

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The first set of comments below refer to a revised version of this scheme which was submitted for planning permission in August 2003. They should be read in conjunction with the second set of comments below which we made when the original version of the scheme was reviewed by the Design Review Committee in May 2003.

The additional design work that has taken place in respect of the lower levels of the scheme and the projecting blade at the top of the tower seem to us to have addressed the detailed concerns previously expressed by our Design Review Committee. We are therefore happy to lend our support to this proposal as a whole. We would draw attention to the points made in our letter of May 28 2003 regarding the details and materials. In our view, the planning authority should condition these aspects to avoid a process of 'dumbing down' if the site is hypothetically sold on with planning permission to a new owner.

Design Review Committee comments:

In general terms we support this impressive proposal. Like English Heritage and Manchester City Council, we accept the arguments for a tall building at this key location, and for a significant high quality development to stimulate the regeneration of the immediate area and to foster links out to the south and southwest. Manchester has a collection of powerful major buildings which work well within the fabric of city, from its listed civic buildings through to No. 1 Deansgate (by this proposal's architect), and this building would be a worthy addition.

The separation between the hotel and residential parts of the tower is strong and lends the most prominent part of the project a distinctive but coherent form. By contrast, the design of the lower levels of the scheme, which have been redesigned recently, is less convincing and would benefit from further work; these parts appears largely pragmatic in their form, and slightly muddled in some of the views illustrated. Reconsideration of this element should allow the lower parts to relate more clearly to the street level environment of the immediate surroundings of the site. We do not think it is necessary for there to be so much glass in the design of the lower parts.

The projecting blade at the top of the tower, although it has the potential to give the tower an interesting and distinctive top, is not yet entirely elegant nor fully resolved in design terms. For it to be successful, we think it needs to relate more clearly to the construction and appearance of the south face of the

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tower, and to read less as an addition. If it cannot be made entirely convincing as an integral part of the design, it might be better to drop it as an idea.

The proposals need to be tested fully against the various criteria set out in the CABA / EH guidance on tall buildings. As this will be the tallest building in Manchester, skyline views from all directions need to be illustrated thoroughly, with realistic and not just outline images of important views.

As with any major tall building, the quality of the result will be heavily dependent on the materials and details of the external envelope. The track record of developer and architect gives us considerable confidence about these aspects, but nevertheless the planning authority needs to protect the city against the possibility that any consent could be 'dumbed down', for example if the site came to be sold for any reason. We would recommend that detailed aspects of the design be controlled extremely closely by means of appropriate planning conditions and/or a Section 106 agreement.

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