

Vice Mayor and Lieutenant Governor
Maria Vassilakou
Executive City Councillor for Urban Planning,
Traffic & Transport, Climate Protection, Energy
and Public Participation
Lichtenfelsgasse 2
1010 Vienna

Dear Vice Mayor Vassilakou,

The *Hotel InterContinental – Wiener Eislaufverein* competition has drawn to a close, and now it is up to City Planning to determine the next steps to be taken. In the course of the experts' consultations held prior to the competition, you assured us that you would not initiate re-zoning of this property without the broad support of the experts. That is why we, the undersigned institutions and individuals, are writing to you again, this time with a declaration on the process and the results of the architecture competition.

DECLARATION

The submissions to the architecture competition have been judged by a prominent jury. However, as a basis for the decision necessary to amend the zoning ordinance, the results of the competition are of no consequence.

The crucial questions concerning the appropriate scale and the height of the building massing were not adequately established prior to the competition. Consequently, no adequate responses could be developed by the participants, nor could such responses be evaluated. During the preparation of the competition, the Chamber of Architects (*Architektenkammer für Wien, Niederösterreich und Burgenland*), on the basis of its extensive experience, warned in its endorsement of the competition of the risks of not clarifying the fundamental issues and parameters in advance. Here, a quote from that statement, dated 12 August 2013:

“We expressly criticize the lack of essential specifications regarding, among other things, the admissible building height; whether the existing hotel is to be retained; and a clear stance from the City of Vienna on ‘World Heritage – Historic Centre of Vienna’. [...] Failing to define the maximum building height, for example, carries with it the danger that some of the competition entries will not be consistent with UNESCO’s requirements.”

The results of the competition now confirm our criticism of the unresolved or contradictory criteria and parameters with respect to current laws and socio-spatial and political justification, as well as our criticism of the magnitude of the building massing and height as requested by the investor.

Last year the undersigned institutions and experts voiced our reservations regarding this endeavour, and in light of the present status of the planning, we are compelled to voice them again.

Therefore, as in our first letter, we demand:

- A limitation of the maximum building height to the present height of Hotel InterContinental
- A corresponding reduction of the building massing (no redistribution at the expense of public space)

Furthermore, in reference to the project in its present state, we demand that there be no sanctioning of infringement upon public space. We emphatically reject the attempt to annex a strip of street space about 10 metres in width along Lothringerstraße, as it constitutes a clear transgression of the site boundaries as set forth in the competition brief. The attempt to shift the responsibility for this infringement to the *Wiener Eislaufverein* – the surface area of its ice-skating rink is contractually guaranteed within the boundaries of the property, and these dimensions would be substantially compromised even if the site were to be enlarged as foreseen in the project – is equally unacceptable.

We above all reject the applicability of the legal justification – as established in Vienna’s Building Code – for the extensive and consequential re-zoning that would be necessary to implement this project. It is incomprehensible to us how re-zoning could tenable in observance of the prerequisites as set forth in the Vienna Building Code. The justifications for re-zoning as cited in the law are “to provide for the common good”, “to preserve and conserve” and “to secure Vienna’s competitiveness with other cities”, and are always in reference to “requirements” and “needs of the populace”, which is generally known as “public interest”.

In the appendix (currently available in German only) we elaborate upon the fact that, in the matter at hand, the “important considerations” and “compelling reasons” that, pursuant to §1 of the Vienna Building Code, are required to amend to the city’s zoning ordinance are clearly lacking.

Furthermore, we point out that the project in this form is inconsistent with the principles of the High-rise Guidelines (2002), and contradicts “Wien, Weltkulturerbe. Der Stand der Dinge” (p. 95), published by the City of Vienna in 2006 “as accountability report and integral component of Vienna’s management plans for World Heritage Zones”, which explicitly lists this site as one which “disallows high-rises” according to the “*Neuen Richtlinien für die Planung und Beurteilung von Hochhausprojekten*” (*New Guidelines for Planning and Evaluating High-rise Projects*, passed by the Vienna City Council in 2002). Two other criteria in the report also pertain to this site: “all major sight lines and visual relationships” are to to be maintained; and high-rises are disallowed in “all World Heritage Sites in Vienna”.

Therefore, we the undersigned call on you, Vice Mayor Vassilakou, to consider the facts presented here and in the appendix, and to take them into account for your deliberations.

With kind regards,

Board of the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Architektur
Gabu Heindl, chair

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Hermann Czech, architect

Otto Kapfinger, journalist

Friedrich Kurrent, architect

Dr Norbert Mayr

Manfred Nehrer, architect

Gustav Peichl, architect

Gottfried Pirhofer

Hans Puchhammer, architect

Anton Schweighofer, architect

Franziska Ullmann, architect

Gunther Wawrik, architect

Vienna, 31 March 2014