# Former RGU students’ union building auctioned for £513,500 amid redevelopment hopes



The former Robert Gordon University (RGU) students’ union, located on Schoolhill in Aberdeen, is set to go under the hammer once again, having garnered a winning bid of just £513,500 in its latest online auction. This figure starkly contrasts the £5 million price tag achieved in December 2014 when the building was sold to the Malmaison/Hotel du Vin Group. At that time, ambitious plans were laid out to transform the building into a boutique hotel featuring 255 bedrooms and a restaurant, a vision that received planning approval in 2015. However, the sharp downturn in the oil and gas sector meant that these plans were ultimately abandoned.

With the online auction conducted by Future Property Auctions, a total of 17 bids were submitted, illustrating a renewed interest in the property despite its previous challenges. Described as a "fantastic development opportunity," this listing includes not only the former students’ union but also the Clarke Building located on Harriet Street, encompassing a combined total of 88,794 square feet. The sale also features a courtyard and represents a significant redevelopment prospect for the area.

Aberdeen, home to two universities and a college, has found itself without a students' union since the RGU building closed its doors in 2013. The lack of such a facility has highlighted a gap in the city's student community, particularly in the city centre. Attempts to revive the property for hotel use came to naught three years ago, and despite its historic significance—being a Category B listed building designed by local architect Alexander Marshall Mackenzie—its future remains uncertain.

Architects Halliday Fraser Munro have indicated that the dual properties could potentially accommodate around 85 residential flats alongside a retail space. Should the site be redeveloped for housing, it would be eligible for an exemption from the requirement to include affordable housing, under Aberdeen City Council's affordable housing waiver policy. This provision could make redevelopment more financially viable, sparking further discussions about the scaling back of potential community housing goals in favour of broader development opportunities.

In addition to the former students’ union, the Inn at the Park in Ferryhill will also return to auction on June 12. Having gone unsold despite a series of previous offers, the Inn experienced a high bid of £435,000 in the latest auction attempt. This property has been on the market intermittently since late 2016, reflecting the challenges many establishments in the region have faced as they navigate changing economic conditions.

Both auctions, set between 10 am and 3 pm on June 12, underscore a broader trend in Aberdeen's property market, indicating a potential resurgence in interest in commercial and development projects amid ongoing efforts to rejuvenate the city center. Whether the former students' union will find a new purpose this time remains to be seen, but its sale points to the evolving landscape of Aberdeen's urban regeneration.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6768101/rgu-students-union-schoolhill-aberdeen-auction/), [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/local/6639758/could-auction-of-landmark-aberdeen-buildings-bring-new-hotel-development/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6768101/rgu-students-union-schoolhill-aberdeen-auction/), [[3]](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/rgu-completes-schoolhill-buildings-sale), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-30343700)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/higher-education/421959/rgu-agrees-multimillion-pound-deal-to-sell-schoolhill-site-to-malmaison-hotel-de-vin-group/), [[6]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/higher-education/972203/robert-gordon-university-sells-two-buildings-in-aberdeen-city-centre/), [[7]](https://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/details/1048359)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/local/6639758/could-auction-of-landmark-aberdeen-buildings-bring-new-hotel-development/), [[6]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/higher-education/972203/robert-gordon-university-sells-two-buildings-in-aberdeen-city-centre/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6768101/rgu-students-union-schoolhill-aberdeen-auction/), [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/local/6639758/could-auction-of-landmark-aberdeen-buildings-bring-new-hotel-development/), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-30343700)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6768101/rgu-students-union-schoolhill-aberdeen-auction/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/local/6639758/could-auction-of-landmark-aberdeen-buildings-bring-new-hotel-development/> - In December 2014, Robert Gordon University (RGU) sold its former student union building on Schoolhill and the Clarke Building on Harriet Street to the Malmaison/Hotel du Vin Group for £5 million. The group planned to convert the site into a 255-bedroom boutique hotel and restaurant. However, due to the downturn in the oil and gas industry, these plans were abandoned. In May 2023, the property was auctioned online by Future Property Auctions, receiving a top bid of £513,500 after 17 bids were submitted. The lot, described as a 'fantastic development opportunity,' includes the buildings and a central courtyard, totaling 88,794 square feet. The property had been vacant since 2013, leaving Aberdeen city centre without a students' union despite housing two universities and a college. Previous attempts to revive the hotel plans were unsuccessful. Architects Halliday Fraser Munro estimated that the two buildings could accommodate about 85 flats and a retail space. If converted into housing, the development would be eligible for Aberdeen City Council’s affordable housing waiver, exempting it from the requirement to include affordable homes. The property is scheduled to be auctioned again on June 12, 2023. Additionally, the Inn at the Park in Ferryhill is also set to be auctioned on the same date, following previous unsuccessful attempts to sell it.
3. <https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/rgu-completes-schoolhill-buildings-sale> - In December 2014, Robert Gordon University (RGU) completed the sale of part of its Schoolhill premises in Aberdeen’s city centre to MHDV Property Holdings. The sold buildings included the university’s Clarke Building, the Students' Union premises, and a tenement block at 54-58 Schoolhill, totaling 93,000 square feet. This sale was part of RGU’s strategy to relocate its academic activities to the Garthdee campus, aiming to provide students with a state-of-the-art teaching and learning environment. The sale also supported the regeneration of Aberdeen’s city centre. The Principal of RGU, Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski, emphasized the university's commitment to both the Garthdee campus and the city's regeneration. Paul Roberts, chief executive of MHDV Property Holdings, highlighted the acquisition's role in supporting the regeneration of Aberdeen city centre. The sale was managed by Cushman & Wakefield, with Amicus Property Consultants acting for MHDV Holdings.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-30343700> - In December 2014, Robert Gordon University (RGU) sold part of its city centre Schoolhill premises in Aberdeen to the Malmaison Hotel du Vin group. The properties sold included the student union and Clarke Building. RGU stated that the sale would allow it to continue developing its Garthdee campus. This deal followed the earlier sale of other RGU premises to the Sandman Group. The BBC reported on this development, noting the strategic move by RGU to focus on its Garthdee campus while facilitating the regeneration of Aberdeen’s city centre.
5. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/higher-education/421959/rgu-agrees-multimillion-pound-deal-to-sell-schoolhill-site-to-malmaison-hotel-de-vin-group/> - In December 2014, Robert Gordon University (RGU) agreed to sell part of its Schoolhill campus in Aberdeen to the Malmaison Hotel du Vin Group for a multimillion-pound deal. The properties sold included the university’s 85,000 square foot Clarke Building and 16,000 square foot student union premises, located next to Aberdeen Art Gallery. The sale was part of RGU’s strategy to move its academic activities to the Garthdee campus, aiming to provide students with a state-of-the-art teaching and learning environment. The hotel scheme was expected to help drive forward the regeneration of the city centre. Malmaison operates 13 hotels in the UK, including one in Queen’s Road in Aberdeen, and has 15 Hotel du Vin developments nationwide. The sale followed a previous deal for RGU’s St Andrew’s Street building, which was sold to the Sandman Group.
6. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/higher-education/972203/robert-gordon-university-sells-two-buildings-in-aberdeen-city-centre/> - In December 2014, Robert Gordon University (RGU) sold two of its premises in Aberdeen city centre: the Clarke Building and the students’ union, both located on Schoolhill. The properties were purchased by MHDV Property Holdings and are now part of a regeneration strategy in the area. This move aligns with RGU’s transfer of academic activities to its Garthdee campus. Principal Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski emphasized the university's commitment to both the Garthdee campus and supporting the regeneration of Aberdeen’s city centre.
7. <https://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/details/1048359> - The former Robert Gordon University (RGU) Union building, located at 54-70 Schoolhill, Aberdeen, is listed as a Category B building at risk. Designed by Alexander Marshall Mackenzie and built between 1885 and 1886, the substantial three-storey and attic L-plan block is in the Renaissance style. The building comprises two distinct designs sympathetically treated to create a well-integrated run. It is constructed of grey granite ashlar with red Correnie granite dressings. The building is situated on high ground at the top of Schoolhill and follows the gentle curve of the street. It is a good example of the work of local architect Alexander Marshall Mackenzie. The unusual use of contrasting red granite dressings eases the transition from the more traditional grey granite buildings on the right to the more formal Renaissance style and heavier red granite dressings of the Art Gallery and associated buildings on the left, also by A M Mackenzie. The careful handling of Renaissance motifs has resulted in a strong composition that contributes positively to the streetscape. The building is currently vacant and disused, with the ground floor openings boarded up. There has been some masonry loss (minimal) and high-level vegetation growths are visible. The property was sold to the Malmaison Hotel du Vin group in December 2014. Planning permission was conditionally granted for change of use to hotel, restaurant, and bar with extension in October 2015. However, delays with plans to convert the former student union into a luxury hotel were reported in June 2015. The building is currently listed as at risk.