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Row over 'icon' statue for town

Work is due to get under way soon on a £250,000 steel sculpture commissioned in a bid to promote the North Lanarkshire town of Cumbernauld.

The sculpture will overlook the main road leading into the town

The statue will be created by well-known public artist Andy Scott and local galvanising firm Highland have agreed to weatherproof it.

But its location overlooking the A80 has prompted a row.

Two SNP councillors have claimed it is being used to divert attention away from the town centre.

Councillor Alan O'Brien and Councillor Willie Homer have resigned from the board of Campsies Centre Cumbernauld Ltd, an independent company set up by North Lanarkshire Council to facilitate the regeneration of the town.

They said they were not against the idea of commissioning an "icon" for Cumbernauld, but claimed the chosen location was an attempt to "camouflage rather than develop" the town centre.

The 10-metre-high sculpture will be of a female form, incorporating two large swooping arcs.

Mr O'Brien said: "I believe that the Campsies Board has given up any attempts to redevelop and instead is focussing solely on diverting attention away from our town centre's neglected condition.

> **"An artwork does not need to be slap bang in the middle of a town to be seen as a landmark of that place"**
>
> Andy Scott
> Artist

"I think there should be a meaningful consultation with the people of Cumbernauld regarding their wishes for the statue."

He added that he had suggested that the sculpture be situated in the town centre as part of an existing project to create a tree-lined avenue called Southern Boulevard, but this proposal was never considered.

His colleague, Mr Homer, added: "I am not against the project, just the location.

"I was one of the group that selected Andy Scott, in fact as an individual I have been trying to work towards getting one of his pieces in the town.

"From the onset, the project was about the town centre and giving pride to the people. Instead it be came about diverting attention."

Artist Andy Scott has defended the project and told the BBC Scotland website: "As a professional public artist with considerable experience in the siting of artworks, I made the decision that the optimum location for an artwork for the town of Cumbernauld would be at that location, for many reasons including land ownership, future land development, sight lines, illumination, access and public prominence.

"An artwork does not need to be slap bang in the middle of a town to be seen as a landmark of that place."

Councillor Gerry McElory, chairman of the Campsies Centre board, added: "This site overlooking the main road connecting Cumbernauld to the rest of Scotland will give the maximum number of people in the town, and across the country, the ability to see this iconic structure."

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