

MILE END SCHOOL, MID STOCKET ROAD, ABERDEEN

REDEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION OF MILE END SCHOOL TO 37 RESIDENTIAL UNITS WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING. ALTERATION OF THE VEHICULAR ACCESS ON BEECHGROVE PLACE. DEMOLITION OF THE SINGLE STOREY TOILET BLOCK EXTENSIONS, OUTDOOR SHELTER AND THE STAND ALONE DINNER HUT.

For: Mile End Developments Ltd

Application Ref.	: P120569	Advert	: Listed Building
Application Date	: 26/04/2012	Advertised on	: 16/05/2012
Officer	: Garfield Prentice	Committee Date	: 8 November 2012
Ward: Midstocket/Rosemount (B Laing/F Forsyth)	Cornie/J	Community Council	: No response received



RECOMMENDATION: Approve Unconditionally

DESCRIPTION

The site is located on the corner of Midstocket Road and Gordondale Road and comprises the former Mile End primary school. The school building and the servitor's cottage are listed buildings (Category C). The main building is positioned centrally on the site with the servitor's cottage located in the south west corner adjacent to the junction of Gordondale Road and Beechgrove Place. The school was constructed circa. 1900. It is an imposing 3½ storey grey granite building with classical detailing. The principal elevation, which has a symmetrical design with regular fenestration, faces west towards Gordondale Road. Single storey, flat-roofed toilet blocks were added to the north and south elevations of the building. The walls of those structures are rendered. The original windows have been replaced throughout the building with upvc-framed units. The servitor's cottage is single storey and constructed in granite with a slate roof. The original windows have been replaced with aluminium-framed units. The school dining hut, a single storey building with metal-clad pitched roof, is located to the north of the main building, close to the boundary with Midstocket Road. Most the ground surrounding the buildings is either concreted or tarred and was used previously as the playground for the school. The site is enclosed by low granite walls with railings or hedging. Only part of the railing are original, with the remainder being installed at a later date. Part of the site is also enclosed by 3 metre high chainlink fencing. The gates, gatepiers, boundary walls and railing are also listed Category C. There are numerous large mature trees around the periphery of the site, which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. There is currently a vehicular access from Beechgrove Place and pedestrian accesses from Gordondale Road and Midstocket Road.

The site is surrounded by residential properties: 2 storey terraced properties on Midstocket Road, 1½ storey houses and 2 storey blocks of flats on Gordondale Road and single storey and 2 storey properties on Beechgrove Place. The surrounding street are within a controlled parking zone.

PROPOSAL

Listed building consent is sought for the conversion and extension of the former school building to form 36 flats (16 maisonettes and 20 apartments) and the refurbishment of the servitor's cottage to form one residential unit. All but two of the maisonettes would comprise 3 bedrooms, the other two units would have 2 bedrooms. 18 apartments would comprise 2 bedrooms and two properties would have 1 bedroom. The proposed extensions would be 4 storeys high and would be located on the north and south sides of the building. The top floor would be set back from the main walls by 5.5 metres. Each extension would measure 12 metres by 16 metres and would attain a height of 16.5 metres. The two extensions would be of the same design and would be finished mostly in granite with large glazed screens on the walls. The extensions would have flat roofs. Small terraces would be provided at the 4th floor level. This is an amended proposal. The footprint of both extensions have been reduced by 14% compared to the original proposal. It is also now proposed to finish the extensions mostly in granite.

It is proposed to carry out extensive alterations to the interior of the building in order to create the flats. The most significant architectural feature within the building is the central atrium around which the classrooms are arranged. It is proposed to re-create a central atrium, albeit smaller than the current feature, within part of which a glass sided lift would be installed. Where possible the original internal walls would be retained, although some sections would be removed.

Externally, it is proposed to replace the windows throughout the building with new timber sash and case windows. Currently the windows are upvc-framed units. It is also proposed to construct six new dormers and replace two existing dormers. Four conservation style rooflights would also be installed. An area between the pitched roofs would be infilled in order to provide additional accommodation at attic level. A new entrance door would be formed on the front elevation of the building.

The refurbishment of the servitor's cottage involves the removal of some of the internal partition walls and the formation of a first floor within the attic. Externally, it is proposed to construct two dormers on the front elevation and to install three conservation style rooflights. New timber sash and case windows would be installed. A three-bedroom house would be created.

As part of the development it is proposed to demolish the existing single storey toilet blocks, an outdoor shelter next to the east boundary and the dining hut.

Vehicular access would be taken from Beechgrove Place, utilising an existing entrance. This would involve widening that access, which require the an existing gatepier to be rebuilt in a new position and the removal of a short section of railings.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE

The application has been referred to the Sub-committee because the proposal has attracted six or more objections from the public. Accordingly, the application falls outwith the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

CONSULTATIONS

ROADS SECTION – No observations

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – It is recommended that conditions be applied to any planning permission to control the hours of construction, in order to protect the amenity of adjacent residents and to require the submission of site contamination report, as there may possibly be contamination issues arising from the boiler room in the school buildings. Suitable and adequate bin storage facilities should be provided within the development.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL – No response received

REPRESENTATIONS

15 letters of objection have been received. The objections relate to the following matters.

- The size, design, appearance and external finishes of the proposed extensions
- The proposed extensions should be finished wholly in granite
- The proposed extensions are too high, resulting in the roofline of the original building being obscured when viewed from various angles
- The proposed extensions would dominate the original building when viewed from many angles
- The original building should not be extended
- The proposal would not be in keeping with the listed status of the building
- The lack of windows in the east and west elevations of the extensions would not be in keeping with the symmetrical arrangement of windows in the original building
- The top floor, of lowered extensions, should include some attempt at vertical columns to reflect the design of the original building
- The existing railing enclosing the site should be retained
- The proposed balconies are out of keeping with the original building

The following matters have also been raised which are not relevant to this application for listed building consent. These matters have been taken into account in the assessment of the parallel application for planning permission (reference P120568)

- Concerns that there would be insufficient car parking for the development
- Increased traffic in the area
- The proposed extensions would obstruct sunlight to many gardens
- The mature trees should be retained
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of views from adjacent gardens
- Concerns that the number of residential units would have an adverse impact on the surrounding area

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy – Historic Environment

Planning authorities should support the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the historic environment. The aim should be to find a new economic use that is viable over the long term with minimum impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the building. Change to a listed building should be managed to protect its special interest while enabling it to remain in active use.

Historic Scotland's Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)

SHEP provides guidance on alterations and extensions to listed buildings and development within conservation areas.

Historic Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Extensions

This document provides guidance on how to apply the policies contained in SHEP and Scottish Planning Policy, and in particular sets out the principles that apply to extending historic buildings.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan

Policy D1 – Architecture and Placemaking

To ensure high standards of design, new development must be designed with due consideration for its context and make a positive contribution to its setting. Factors such as siting, scale massing, colour, materials, orientation, details, the proportions of building elements, together with the spaces around buildings will be considered in assessing that contribution.

Policy D4 – Aberdeen's Granite Heritage

The City Council will encourage the retention of granite buildings throughout the City even if not listed or in a conservation area. Conversion and adaptation of redundant granite buildings will be favoured.

Policy D5 – Built Heritage

Proposals affecting listed buildings will only be permitted if they comply with Scottish Planning Policy.

EVALUATION

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where a proposal affects a listed building Sections 14(2) and 59(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 places a duty on planning authorities in determining an application for listed building consent to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This is the primary consideration in the determination of applications for listed building consent.

The former Mile End School is a Category C listed building that has lain vacant for some time. It is unlikely that it will be brought back into use as a school. Consequently, in order to ensure the long term maintenance of the building it is necessary to consider appropriate alternative uses. Policy D4 of the local development plan encourages alternative uses for redundant listed buildings, provided the new uses would not destroy or seriously harm the essential character or setting of the building. There is general support in SPP and SHEP for the conversion of the school to a suitable use that would protect the character and integrity of the listed building and ensure its long-term retention, maintenance and active use. Conversion to residential use is considered to be an appropriate alternative use for the school.

Proposed Alterations to the Former School Building

The proposal involves quite extensive alterations to the interior of the building, including the removal of some sections of the original internal partition walls. Where possible, original walls would be retained, but it would be difficult to convert the building to residential use without the removal of some of the walls. The central atrium, which is a typical and important feature of the schools built in Aberdeen circa 1990, would be re-created, albeit smaller than the current feature. Notwithstanding, the new atrium would reflect the historical internal character of the building with a walkway provided around its periphery and accommodation beyond that. Although the original classroom layout would be lost, which would be inevitable, at least to some extent, in any conversion to residential use, the overall internal character of the listed building would not be significantly adversely affected. It needs to be recognised and acknowledged that the building is unlikely to be used again as a school, so an alternative use must be found, even if it results in some of the original layout and fabric of the building being lost.

Externally, it is proposed to replace the windows throughout the building with new timber sash and case windows. The specification of the proposed windows is acceptable and would enhance the appearance of the listed building. Although the Historic Scotland publication "Managing Change in the Historic Environment - Roofs" advises that new dormers should generally be avoided, the construction of new dormers in this case would not adversely affect the overall appearance and integrity of the listed building. This is partly due to the fact there already are dormers, but also because the size of the dormers relative to the scale of the building means there would be little visual impact on the overall appearance of the building. The infilled area between the pitched roofs would not adversely affect the integrity of the building. It would not be visible from any public place. The provision of a new door on the principal elevation is acceptable. Its size and proportions are satisfactory. The symmetry of the building would be retained and there would be no adverse impact on its appearance.

It is considered that overall the proposed works to the former school building would be sympathetic to its character and appearance and thus are acceptable.

Proposed Extensions to the Former School Building

The proposal involves constructing two extensions, one on each to the north and south sides of the building. Since the proposal was originally lodged with the Council, the size of the extensions, in terms of their footprint, have been reduced by 60sqm (i.e a 14% reduction). For comparison, the footprint of the existing building with the toilet blocks (which it is proposed to demolish) is 1128sqm, while the proposed extensions would result in an overall footprint of 1238sqm, an increase of 110sqm (10% increase). In the context of the size of the existing building and the size of the site, this increase in footprint is not considered to be significant or detrimental to the listed building or the character of the surrounding area.

Whilst the footprints of the proposed extensions are acceptable, of greater importance is the scale and massing of the extensions, which would be 16.5

metres high. Policy D1 requires all new development to be of a high standard and designed with due consideration for its context. There should also be a positive impact on the character and appearance of the area. Policy D5 permits alterations and extensions to listed buildings provided they comply with Scottish Planning Policy. SPP states *“Planning authorities should support the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the historic environment. The aim should be to find a new economic use that is viable over the long term with minimum impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the building or area.”* Historic Scotland’s document *“Managing Change in the Historic Environment - Extensions”* states *“Extensions must protect the character and appearance of the building; should be subordinate in scale and form; should be located on a secondary elevation; and must be designed in a high-quality manner using appropriate materials”*.

It is in this context that the proposed extensions must be assessed. The history of use of a historic building is reflected in the cumulative changes made to it. New alterations and additions form part of this continuum. Most historic buildings can sustain some degree of alteration or extension to accommodate new uses. *“Managing Change in the Historic Environment”* indicates that quite substantial additions can be made to some buildings without detracting from the character of the original building. Although the Community Council has expressed concerns that the style of the extensions would not be in keeping with the listed building, in this case, it is considered that relatively large extensions would be acceptable. The scale and massing would be subordinate to and complement the building, while the design would provide a contrast of old and new in a non-assertive way. It is acknowledged that the building is an imposing landmark in the local area. However, the addition of the extensions would not dilute that stature. It would still remain as an imposing and elegant landmark building. The principal elevation of the original building would remain visually dominant, in particular when viewed from Gordondale Road. The building’s architectural quality would not be undermined by the design of the extensions. The proposed external finishes, in particular the extensive use of granite, are of a high quality and would respect and complement the existing granite building. Whilst the extensions would be on secondary elevations, albeit elevations that face towards a road, it is acknowledged that there would be some visual impact on the principal elevation. However, the extensions would be lower than the original building and set behind from the line of the principal facade, in accordance with Historic Scotland guidance. The former school is a large building of symmetrical design. The two extensions, which would be of the same design but handed, would ensure that the symmetry would remain and thus would not undermine the original design concept of the building. The number, position and proportions of the windows in the extensions are satisfactory. The inclusion of balconies would not detract from the appearance and character of the extensions or original building. For these reasons it is considered that the proposal complies with the design principles set out in the relevant Historic Scotland guidance documents and the underlying principles of Policy D1 and thus is acceptable in this regard.

Proposed Alterations to the Servitor's Cottage

The proposed refurbishment of the servitor's cottage involves some internal alterations, none of which would undermine the essential character, integrity or listed status of the building. The proposed external alterations, involving the construction of dormers, installation of rooflight and the replacement of the windows, would not significantly alter the character of the cottage. Accordingly, this part of the proposal is acceptable.

Demolition of toilet blocks and dining hut

As part of the redevelopment it is proposed to remove the toilet blocks. These works are categorised as an alteration to the building rather than demolition. The outdoor shelter and dining hut would also be removed. None of these structures have any particular architectural merit and their loss would not detract from the character and integrity of the listed building or its setting. Indeed, the removal of the dining hut would improve significantly its setting.

Alteration to Boundary to Form Improved Access

Part of the existing boundary enclosure with Beechgrove Place would be altered to allow the formation of an improved access for the development. The removal of a short section of the railings would have no significant impact on the character and setting of the listed building and therefore is acceptable. The remainder of the boundary walls and railings would be retained.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the design of the proposal, both internally and externally, is of a good standard that would ensure the overall character and integrity of the listed building would be retained. The extensive use of granite on the extensions is particularly welcomed. The proposal would ensure that the building would be maintained in the longer term and brought back into active use. The proposal complies with the aims of SPP, SHEP and the local plan in terms of allowing appropriate alternative uses for listed buildings and ensuring the long-term retention of listed buildings.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve Unconditionally

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The design of the proposal, both internally and externally, is of a good standard that would ensure the overall character and integrity of the listed building would be retained. It would ensure that the building would be maintained in the longer term and brought back into active use. The proposal complies with the aims of

SPP, SHEP and the local plan in terms of allowing appropriate alternative uses for listed buildings and ensuring the long-term retention of listed buildings.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.