

# Planning Development Management Committee

ENGINEERING SCIENCE FACILITY, QUEEN'S ROAD, ABERDEEN

ERECTION OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE FACILITY

For: Albyn School

Application Type : Detailed Planning Permission  
Application Ref. : P150161  
Application Date: 05/02/2015  
Officer: Sepideh Hajisoltani  
Ward : Hazlehead/Ashley/Queen's Cross(M Greig/J Stewart/R Thomson/J Corall)

Advert : Section 60/65 - Dev aff LB/CA  
Advertised on: 18/02/2015  
Committee Date: 16/07/2015  
Community Council :



## RECOMMENDATION:

**Approve Unconditionally**

## **DESCRIPTION**

The application site is located on the south side of Queen's Road adjacent to the junction with Forest Avenue and comprises Albyn School; an independent, co-educational school with approximately 740 pupils aged 2-18. The school grounds extend back to Queen's Lane South and cover an area of approximately 1.1 hectares with various associated buildings and external areas. Four of the granite buildings within the site are listed (dating from 1879 to 1884); the buildings at 19, 21 and 23 Queen's Road are 'B' listed, whilst 17 Queen's Road is 'C' listed. The buildings are set back from Queen's Road by 20-22 metres behind the staff and visitor car park. The application refers specifically to the southern most section of the site and to the rear of No. 17 Queens Road, facing the rear lane.

To the south and east of the site are residential properties while on the opposite side of Queen's Road and Forest Avenue is a mix of residential and office buildings. The site is located within Albyn/ Rubislaw Conservation area and is identified as being within the west End Office Area, as designated in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012).

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

Over the years there have been several planning applications relating to Albyn School. In particular, detailed planning permission (A5/1869) and Listed Building Consent (A5/1906) for proposed new primary school extension to rear of number 23 Queen's Road and internal alterations and proposed new access opening to boundary along Forest Avenue and Queen's Road was approved conditionally in April 2006.

## **PROPOSAL**

Detailed planning permission is sought for erection of a single storey facility to the rear of the application site (No.17 Queen's Road). The proposed building would be attached to the existing building to the south of the site which also fronts onto Queen's Lane.

The building would measure approximately 17.2m x 11.6m and would have an overall footprint of 212.7sqm. The proposed pitched roof has an eaves height of 4m and a ridge height of 6.3m. The linking section of the pitched roof on the western pitch would be used to house and screen ventilation equipment.

The proposal would accommodate a new facility for teaching engineering and technology related subjects. The facility would be accessed through an entrance to the north elevation and would comprise of two classrooms and a storage space. The design incorporates a total of 5 windows to the north and east elevations. The finishing material would be pre-weathered zinc cladding for the roof and white render and matching zinc cladding for the external walls.

The existing boundary wall would be taken down and materials would be reserved for rebuilding it at the completion of the project. Rubble wall and copes would be repointed using lime mortar.

It should be noted that the initial proposal has been amended and neighbours have been re-notified accordingly. The amendments include reducing the overall footprint of the proposal by approximately 15sqm and changing the orientation of the proposed building to reduce its impact on neighbouring properties.

### **Supporting Documents**

All drawings and the supporting documents listed below relating to this application can be viewed on the Council's website at

<http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?ref=150161>

On accepting the disclaimer enter the application reference quoted on the first page of this report.

### **REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE**

The application has been referred to the Planning Development Management Committee because the proposal has attracted 11 letters of objection through the neighbour notification process. Submission of the amended drawings followed by the neighbour re-notification process has attracted 2 letters of objections. Accordingly, the application falls outwith the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

**Roads Development Management** – No observations.

**Environmental Health** – In order to protect the residents from any potential noise disturbance during the construction, the timing of construction works should be restricted.

**Communities, Housing and Infrastructure (Flooding)** - No observations.

**Community Council** – No comments received.

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

Eleven letters of objection have been received. The objections raised relate to the following matters –

1. The proposed design and materials are out keeping with the character of the Albyn/Rubislaw Conservation Area and the West End;
2. The overall scale of the proposal and its impact on the residential character of the area;
3. The proposal will result in over-development of the site;
4. Overshadowing and daylight impact on the Coach House (No. 15 Queen's Road) and 48 Gladstone Place;
5. Lack of sufficient playground space at the school;
6. The increase in class space would lead to an increase in student numbers and this would ultimately impact on traffic situation;
7. The construction would result in deterioration and damage of the roads;
8. Disruption and lack of access to Gladstone Place/ Queen's Lane over the past years due to previous Albyn School Developments;

9. Lack of disruption and traffic management enforcement by the Council;
10. Impact of the development on traffic arrangements in the area
11. The opportunistic character of the proposed development and lack of an urgent need for an engineering facility while the school can use the existing engineering facilities at Robert Gordon University;
12. The previous development created noise, substantial pounding and vibration as well as damage to some of the neighbouring properties.
13. School's lack of engagement with local residents;

## **PLANNING POLICY**

### **National Policy and Guidance**

#### Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

Development should pay regard to the layout, design, materials, scale, siting and use of listed buildings, as well as their surrounding area's character and appearance. It also states that development should either enhance or preserve the character or appearance of a conservation area.

### **Aberdeen Local Development Plan**

#### Policy D1- Architecture and Placemaking

To ensure high standard 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, including streets, squares, open space, landscaping and boundary treatments, will be considered in assessing that contribution.

#### Policy BI3- West End Office Area

In this area (shown on the Proposals Map), applications for change of use for office purposes will be given favourable consideration. Where there is scope to provide access to properties from rear lanes this will only be considered acceptable if satisfactory traffic management measures are in place, or can be provided by the developer, along the rear lanes. The development of associated front garden to car parks and driveways, and the subsequent erosion of associated landscaping, will not be permitted. The reinstatement and restoration of car parks to front gardens will be encouraged by the council.

#### Policy H1- Residential Areas

Within existing residential areas (H1 on the Proposals Map) and within new residential developments, proposals for new residential development and householder development will be approved in principle if it:

1. Does not constitute overdevelopment;
2. Does not have an unacceptable impact on the character or amenity of the surrounding area; and
3. Complies with Supplementary Guidance contained in the Householder Development Guide

### Policy D5- Built Heritage

Proposals affecting Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings will only be permitted if they comply with Scottish Planning Policy. The legislation states “the overall integrity and character of the designated area will not be compromised and mitigation and appropriate measures shall be taken to conserve and enhance the essential characteristics, aesthetics, archaeological and historic value and setting of the site”.

### Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

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The following policies substantively reiterate policies in the adopted local development plan as summarised above:

D1- Quality Placemaking by Design (D1- Architecture and Placemaking);  
B3- West End Office Area (B13- West End Office Area)  
H1- Residential Properties (H1- Residential Properties)  
D5- Our Granite Heritage (D5- Built Heritage)

### **EVALUATION**

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the development plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 places a duty on planning authorities to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Albyn School has a programme of continual improvement for maintaining a high record of academic achievement in Scotland. As stated in the associated design statement “*the school has identified that there is a need for as many pupils as possible to have education in engineering and technology related subjects*”. The proposed development would accommodate the new Engineering Science Facility and would support the existing educational buildings on site.

### Design, Scale & Massing

The proposed development would be located to the southern most section of the site and will be facing Queen’s Lane, which gives access to the rear of properties and garages on Queen’s Road and Gladstone Place. The proposed building would not be visible from Queen’s Road or Forest Avenue. The proposal would have a contemporary design appropriate for a new school building. It should be noted that over the years there has been an established development pattern within Albyn School for contemporary design and therefore approval of this application would be in-keeping with the evolving character of the school.

It is considered that the new building would have no significant impact on the appearance of the locality or on the character of the conservation area as there is already a variety of different properties (residential, educational and office buildings of various design) facing to Queen's Lane. The Council's Conservation officers have raised no concerns in regards to the proposed design and materials. The use of pre-weathered zinc is welcomed as the material would display a more monochromic appearance when installed versus unfinished zinc that would patina differently depending on the exposure to the environment.

The overall height of the development would be higher than the existing building to the west, however it would still be subservient to the original buildings facing Queen's Road and the coach house belonging to No.15 Queen's Road.

The proposal would result in an increase in site coverage from 46% to approximately 48%, which is considered to be acceptable within the context of a school in an urban site.

#### Residential Amenity Impact

The school itself is not located within a 'Residential Area', however as the properties to the south of the proposed development are all residential, the development has been assessed against the relevant policy of *H1- Residential Areas*. It is considered that the revised proposal would not result in any impacts in terms of overshadowing or loss of daylight to the neighbouring properties, in compliance with Policy H1. The introduction of windows to the east and north elevation is deemed appropriate as it will not compromise the privacy of the neighbouring properties.

#### West End Office Area

This policy is not directly relevant to the assessment of this application as it is an enabling policy for change of use for office development. Also, the proposal relates to an existing and well established use in the West End.

#### Matters Raised in Representations

Objection points 1-4 relating to design, size, scale, materials, impact on surrounding conservation areas and impact on residential amenity have been addressed in the evaluation section of this report. All elements of the proposal have been found to comply with the relevant policies set out in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

Objection point 5 relates to the loss of green space as a result of proposed development. The proposal will be replacing an amount of green space (grass) that was originally intended to serve the school as playground, however this area is mentioned to be largely underused. The applicant has advised that the school is served by its playing field facility at Milltimber, which provides regular recreational and physical education opportunities for pupils of all ages. It is also considered that after development sufficient areas of open space and under-cover play areas will remain on site.

Objection point 6-10 relates to the access, roads and traffic management. As stated in the submitted design statement, the number of students will not be increased and the new facility is intended to extend the education facilities for the current school role. As a result the proposal is not going to have any detrimental impact on traffic management. Other points raised regarding the lack of enforcement on illegal parking is not a relevant material consideration for assessment of this application. The roads officer has considered the application and has no objection to the proposal.

Objection 11 is not a material planning consideration as the proposed use for the facility would serve the existing educational purpose of the school which is not considered to be an incompatible or unacceptable use.

Objection 12 & 13 are referring to the previous developments, however it should be noted that problems arising from the construction period are not a material planning consideration and accordingly are not relevant to this decision.

Full regard has been given to all concerns raised in representations, but neither do they outweigh the policy position as detailed above, nor they justify further amendments to the plans or refusal of the application.

#### Conclusion

The proposed development complies with the development plan and meets the requirements of SPP and SHEP. The location, scale, design and finishing material are acceptable. The proposal would not be detrimental to the character of the conservation area nor it would have a significant impact on the setting of the listed buildings that form the main part of the school. The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity of the neighbouring properties. Accordingly, it is recommended that the application be approved.

#### Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The Proposed ALDP was approved at the meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee of 28 October 2014. It constitutes the Council's settled view as to what should be the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, along with the adopted ALDP. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the Proposed ALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on whether:

- these matters have been subject to public consultation through the Main Issues Report; and
- the level of objection raised in relation these matters as part of the Main Issues Report; and
- the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration

The foregoing can only be assessed on a case by case basis. In relation to this particular application, *Policies D1- Quality Placemaking by Design, B13- West End Office Area, H1- Residential Areas and D5- Built Heritage* substantively reiterate the guidance given from policies in the adopted Local Development Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Approve Unconditionally**

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The location, scale, design and finishing materials of the proposed development are acceptable. The proposal would not be detrimental to the character of the conservation area nor would it have a significant impact on the setting of the listed buildings that form the main part of the school. The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity of the neighbouring properties. Therefore the application complies with the adopted Local Development Plan Policies D1- Architecture and Placemaking, H1- Residential Areas, BI3- West End Office Area and D5- Built Heritage and the equivalent policies in the Proposed Local Development Plan. The proposal also meets the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Historic Environment Policy.

## **INFORMATIVE**

- (1) In order to protect the residents of the surrounding/ adjacent properties from any potential noise nuisance arising from the proposed buildings works, no construction or demolition work shall take place:
  - (a) Out with the hours of 0700 to 1900 on Monday to Friday
  - (b) Out with the hours of 0900 to 1600 on Saturdays, and
  - (c) at any time on Sundays, except for works inaudible out with the application site boundary
  - (d) If Piling Operations are to be carried out, agreement should be reached with this Service regarding hours of operation.