

Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

Assessments are carried out against the Listing Criteria published in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) 2011, pp74-76: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf

Proposal Type: Propose a new building or structure to be added to the list
Proposed Action:** In view of Planning Permission in Principle Application suggest not adding the building to the list but to inform Aberdeen City Council of its interest (see Other Information section below)

Building Name: Strathcona House
Existing Statutory Listing Address: N/A
Proposed Statutory Listing Address: N/A



South elevation (28-May-2015) © Crown copyright



North elevation (28-May-2015) © Crown copyright



Ground floor hall (28-May-2015) © Crown copyright



Entrance hall and staircase (28-May-2015) © Crown copyright

Council Area: Aberdeen City Council
National Grid Reference: NJ 88596 10429
LB Number: N/A

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Existing Listing Category: N/A
Proposed Listing Category: N/A
Other designations: None
Case Reference: 300016539
File Reference No(s): HGH/B/GA/84

Listing Background

There is no known previous assessment of Strathcona House for listing. Strathcona House was proposed for listing on 15 April 2015. The building was visited on 28 May 2015 when the interior and exterior were seen.

Development Proposals

Strathcona House is part of the Rowett Institute. The Institute (now part of the University of Aberdeen) is in the process of relocating from its Bucksburn campus to a new building at the Foresterhill health campus in Aberdeen. The Bucksburn site is allocated for the new Aberdeen Entertainment and Conference Centre in the Local Development Plan of 2011. The initial design concept for the new AECC proposed the retention and refurbishment of Strathcona House as a leisure facility, however, the latest iteration of the Draft Masterplan proposes the demolition of Strathcona House. A Planning Permission in Principle Application for 'Demolition of existing buildings, erection of exhibition and conference centre including subterranean space, energy centre, hotels, offices, leisure, cafe/restaurants and associated access, landscaping, engineering works (including burn diversion) and car parking (including temporary car parking)' was submitted and validated by Aberdeen City Council on 22 May 2015. This application proposes the demolition of Strathcona House. In view of this we will not be considering Strathcona House further for listing at this time however this assessment will be provided to Aberdeen City Council to help inform their consideration of the application and the draft masterplan which is currently at public consultation.

Summary Description

Arthur G Ingham, 1928-1933, extended by addition of east wing in 1950 (dated inscription to west elevation of east wing). 3-storey, 13-bay, roughly H-plan hall of residence on a university research institute campus to the northwest of Aberdeen. Squared and snecked rock-faced red sandstone, including base course. Round-arched entrance to left of west elevation with panelled timber doors and semi-circular decorative fanlight.

South (principal elevation) has a 7-bay centre with full-width veranda, flanked by advanced gables, and further advanced wings to the outer bays. The veranda has square ashlar piers supporting a balustraded balcony and the central pair of piers are topped by urns. There is a central curvilinear shaped gable with a bipartite window. The centre section has catslide dormers breaking eaves. 2nd floor windows breaking eaves to return of advanced wings with triangular dormerheads with carved thistle and rose.

North (rear) elevation with advanced 2-bay shaped gable to centre. Scrolled and triangular

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dormerheads. Advanced outer gabled wings with tripartite windows to each floor.

Variety of multi-pane glazing patterns in timber sash and case windows. uPVC windows to ground floor hall and bedrooms. Pitched roof with grey slates. Rock-faced red sandstone ridge and gable stacks.

The interior is arranged around a long, double height, rectangular-plan ground floor hall with oak panelling and exposed timber beams to the ceiling. Stone fireplace at each end of hall and ingleneuk at centre of north wall with stone fireplace and overmantel incorporating oil painting of pioneers. This fireplace is flanked by a pair of small stained glass windows installed in 1937. 8 stained glass windows, installed from 1933-1937, depict British colonies. The entrance hall has oak panelling and an imperial staircase with a metal balustrade with a geometric pattern. Pair of timber and glazed doors to entrance vestibule with sidelights and decorative semi-circular fanlight. At the 1st floor of the southwest wing is the former common room, which is oak panelled with an integral mantelpiece and scrolled overmantel to the north wall. The bedrooms, are on the 1st floor (above the main hall). Each bedroom door has wide, panelled rybats, which form the side of integral cupboards to the bedroom, and each bedroom has a press with a washbasin.

2 pairs of circular, rubble gatepiers with domed ashlar caps to the northwest and northeast.

Listing Criteria* (SHEP, 2011) pp74-75

Criteria for determining whether a building is of 'special architectural or historic interest' for listing under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/9/contents]

**To be listed, a building need not meet all the listing criteria. The criteria provide a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions.*

Age & Rarity

Strathcona House was begun in 1929 to designs by Arthur G Ingham, chief engineer and surveyor to the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. The building was designed to provide residential accommodation for research workers and visiting scientists to the Rowett Research Institute, a research centre for the study of food and nutrition.

The institute was founded in 1913, with John Boyd Orr as its first director from 1914-1945. Boyd Orr was given £5,000 to begin building the institute and was required to raise funds for its completion. The first laboratory was built at the nearby Craibston College of Agriculture (now part of Scotland's Rural College). Dr John Quiller Rowett, a London businessman and wine merchant, donated money to the institute which was used to purchase 41 acres at Bucksburn.

The Rowett Institute was opened by Queen Mary in 1922

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with a tree planting ceremony. The campus developed with the building of the Walter Reid Library in 1923-1924, the thousand-acre John Duthie Webster Experimental Farm in 1925 and then Strathcona House in 1928.

The expansion of the Rowett Institute by the addition of a £20,000 hostel for the 'accommodation of junior [research] workers in training to go overseas and of overseas workers coming to the institute' is recorded in the 22 December 1928 edition of the Aberdeen Journal. Strathcona House is named after the 3rd Lord Strathcona (1891-1959) who provided £10,000 for the building. On 24 October 1929 Tom Johnston, Under Secretary of State for Scotland, cut the first turf.

Strathcona House was completed in 1933 and a detailed account of the building features in an Aberdeen Journal article of the same year. The article described it as 'built in characteristic Scottish manner' and 'of a collegiate nature', going on to describe 'a large dining-hall, which is panelled in oak. Clerestory lighting is provided and interest is centred at both ends of the room on stone mantelpieces'. The ingleneuk at the centre of the north wall is also noted with an overmantel 'in which is incorporated an oil painting by Mr Gibson, Dundee, the picture being symbolic of pioneers'. The article also mentions the main staircase that leads to the oak panelled common room, which is over the 3-room caretaker's house and fifteen dormitory rooms with large integral cupboards, including a press with a washbasin. The furnishings were the work of the Aberdeen cabinetmakers and furnishers, John L Archibald and Sons.

The stained glass windows to the grand hall are not original to the design of the building. The first stained glass window was installed in 1933 and more were added gradually until 1937 when the final two were unveiled by Sir David Chadwick, Secretary of the Imperial Agricultural Bureau Council. These windows depict colonies of the British Empire. Also unveiled in 1937 were two smaller stained glass windows that flank the ingleneuk fireplace and symbolise health and plenty. The four 1937 windows were designed by Dr William Kelly. In 1949 portraits of Lord Strathcona and his cousin Mount Royal were presented to the Institute and hang in the entrance hall and the overmantel of the common room fireplace respectively.

Strathcona House was designed with a view to extending

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(Aberdeen Journal, 1933) and a plaque on the west elevation of the east wing records that this extension was added in 1950, being opened on the 18 November by Lord Strathcona. The east wing was designed to replicate the 1929 building and made the building almost symmetrical. This wing accommodated a kitchen and two flats with a further 9 bedrooms.

Research facilities/campuses are not rare and can be found across Scotland, as many are now affiliated to one of Scotland's 15 Universities or numerous tertiary and higher education institutions. Research campuses have a variety of buildings to accommodate educational and research requirements, and those in rural locations may include onsite residential facilities. Wilson Hall, at West of Scotland Agricultural College's Auchincruive campus, is a hall of residence for a rural campus, which was designed in 1955-56 but is reminiscent of Scots 17th century style, and it is listed at category C.

An early purpose-built hall of residence is the 1865 Macintosh Hall in St Andrews (listed at B). The majority of purpose-built halls of residences in Scotland date from the 1950s when there were significant university building programmes underway at Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh, or following the 1963 Robbins Report which recommended the expansion of universities as a priority as well as the establishment of new universities. Halls of residences of this date include Pollock Halls Phases I and II (1956-1964) in Edinburgh and Crombie Halls (1953-60) in Aberdeen, which are both listed at category A.

Strathcona House is likely to be a relatively rare example of a purpose built hall of residence for its period, as many students in the 19th and early 20th century will have lived at home or in private lodgings. However, more research on this building type before the 1950s would be useful to gain a wider understanding of the context of purpose-built halls of residence.

Strathcona House is not early for a purpose built hall of residence but it is distinguished because of the quality of its design which references a historicist collegiate style. It has good sandstone detailing and a good interior decorative scheme (see below), and the building remains largely unaltered since the east wing was added in 1950.

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Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

The original decorative scheme is largely retained and of particular interest is the oak panelling and mantelpieces to the large ground floor hall, entrance hall and 1st floor former common room. The later stained glass windows also add interest to the hall. The detailing to the 1st floor bedrooms, such as the large integral cupboards, is typical for its date, although it is unusual that such fixtures and fittings have survived and the rooms have not been substantially refurbished.

Plan form

The plan form is arranged around a large, double height rectangular-plan hall to the ground floor with south facing bedrooms to the upper floor and recalls the collegiate style (see Technological Excellence section below). The plan form and footprint remains largely altered since the east wing was added in 1950, with a lack of later subdivision of rooms and extensions.

Technological Excellence or innovation, material or design quality

The design and plan form of the building draws on historical academic sources, with strong references to the collegiate style. The collegiate style was prevalent in the design of English Universities that are composed of different colleges, and is based on the design of medieval collegiate churches (so called because they housed a college, or community, of priests). At Strathcona House this style is evidenced in the balustraded veranda with square ashlar columns that dominates the principal elevation and flanking wings, and this elevation is reminiscent of quadrangles of collegiate colleges and churches.

Aberdeen City Council, in their 2015 *Communities, Housing & Infrastructure Report* states that Strathcona House is the 'largest sandstone building in Aberdeen' and 'potentially unique in Aberdeen's built heritage'. Much of Aberdeen's building stock, particularly large public buildings, are constructed in granite. The use of sandstone is unusual for Aberdeen, however there are many sandstone buildings found across Scotland. It is the number of good quality sandstone details which marks out Strathcona House of

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	<p>particular interest in this category. This detailing includes the rock-faced stonework and carved motifs to the dormerheads which are a particular feature of the Scots Baronial style. This style was prevalent in civic and estate architecture from the mid 19th century and 1928 is a relatively late use of such detailing.</p> <p>The non-traditional replacement of many of the timber windows, has had some impact on its interest in listing terms.</p> <p>Little is currently known about Arthur C Ingham (1885-1966), except that he was chief engineer and surveyor to the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. At present only two buildings are credited to Ingham in the Dictionary of Scottish Architects: The Hannah Research Institute in Auchincruive, Ayrshire which had research, animal laboratories and agricultural buildings designed in 1931, and laboratories, poultry houses and sheds at the Poultry Research Centre on West Mains Road, Edinburgh of circa 1958.</p> <p>Setting</p> <p>The former Rowett Institute campus has developed incrementally since the institute moved to this site in the 1920s. Strathcona House is the southernmost building on the campus retaining a large area of garden ground to the south and is a very prominent building on the campus as it is clearly visible from the A96 from Aberdeen to Inverurie.</p> <p>Regional variations</p> <p>There are no known regional variations.</p>
<p>Close Historical Association</p>	<p>The first director of the Rowett Research Institute was John Boyd Orr (1880-1971), a Scottish scientist and authority on nutrition. In 1936 Boyd Orr published 'Food, Health and Income', which was the findings of a dietary survey by income groups that showed that the cost of a diet fulfilling basic nutritional requirements was beyond the means of half the British population and that 10 percent of the population was undernourished. The Carnegie Trust gave the Institute a grant of £15,000 to continue this study. Although analysis of the data was in progress when the Second World War broke out, it became the basis for the government's policy on food rationing during the War, which Boyd Orr helped to formulate as a member of the</p>

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	<p>Cabinet’s Scientific Committee on Food Policy. Boyd Orr was Director of the Institute between 1914 and 1945 after which he was Rector of the University of Glasgow (1945 to 1947) and then Chancellor (1947-1971). The University of Glasgow has named a building after him and there are several streets across Scotland which bear his name, including in his hometown of Kilmaurs, Ayrshire.</p>
<p>Working with the Principles of Listing (SHEP 2011, p76)</p>	<p>In choosing buildings within the above broad headings particular attention is paid to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. special value within building types</i> <i>b. contribution to an architecturally or historically interesting group</i> <i>c. the impact of vernacular buildings</i> <i>d. authenticity</i>
	<p>When working with the principles of listing Strathcona House has particular interest under a and d.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is a well-detailed example of an early 20th century hall of residence with strong references to the collegiate style in its design and plan form, as well as a relatively late use of Scots Baronial details. It has a good quality decorative scheme to the interior, with oak panelling to the principal public rooms and some stained glass windows. d. With the exception of the non-traditional replacement of many of the windows, the building remains largely unaltered to the exterior and interior since the east wing was added in 1950.
<p>Summary of assessment against the listing criteria</p>	
<p>Strathcona House was built as a hall of residence for the Rowett Institute, a renowned research facility that was pioneering in the study of health and nutrition. The design and plan form of the building draws on historical academic sources, with strong references to the collegiate style. This is particularly evidenced in the large ground floor hall and the balustraded veranda that dominates the principal elevation. Unusually for a building of this scale in Aberdeen (‘the granite city’) Strathcona House is constructed in red sandstone and is distinguished by its late use of Scots Baronial details, including the rock-faced stonework and the carved motifs to the dormerheads. The early 20th century interior decorative scheme largely survives and includes good-quality oak panelling to the principal public rooms, such as the large ground floor hall which also retains its stone fireplaces and stained glass. The research of the Institute’s first director, John Boyd Orr, was influential in informing the government’s food rationing policy during the Second World War.</p>	

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Category of Listing

Categories of listing are non-statutory and buildings are assigned a category (A, B or C) according to their relative importance following the assessment against the criteria for listing.

Category definitions are found at: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/heritage/historicandlistedbuildings/listing

The interest of Strathcona House is considered to be of local importance and it may meet the criteria for listing at category C.

Other information

Strathcona House has been proposed for demolition as part of a Planning Permission in Principle Application. In certain circumstances we may not list a building which is found to meet the criteria for listing (see our website <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/historicandlistedbuildings/whatwelist.htm>). These circumstances may include planning applications which affect the character of the building, an appeal period or appeal against refusal of planning permission, and/or other development proposals. In view of this will not be considering Strathcona House further for listing at this time. However, this assessment will be provided to Aberdeen City Council to help inform their consideration of the application and the draft masterplan for the site which is currently at public consultation. If the planning situation changes we may consider its case again for listing.

Select Bibliography and References

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:
<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/canmore.html> CANMORE ID 210202

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Aberdeen Journal (06 November 1937) 'Strathcona Hall of Empire'. p.3

Aberdeen Journal (07 October 1949) 'To do Honour to Lord Strathcona'. p.3

Aberdeen Journal (28 June 1950) 'Modern Miracle – The Rowett Institute'. p.6

Aberdeen City Council (19 May 2015) *Communities, Housing & Infrastructure Report* at <http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s46566/Draft%20Rowett%20North%20Masterplan.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2015).

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The University of Aberdeen. *Rowett Centenary* at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett-centenary/index.php> (accessed 2 June 2015).

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Nobel Prize. *Lord Boyd Orr – Biographical* at http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1949/orr-bio.html (accessed 3 June 2015)

Dictionary of Scottish Architects. *A G Ingham* at http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=206816 (accessed 2 June 2015).

Listing and Designed Landscapes Team

08 June 2015

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