

8th February 2016
By letter and e-mail

Development Management
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
Business Hub 4, Marischal College
Broad Street
Aberdeen AB10 1AB

Dear Sir/Madam

Victoria Road School (151260 – revised application)

Further to our letter of objection submitted to the City Council dated 26th August 2015, we have given consideration at our meeting held on Thursday 21st January 2016 on a revised planning application submitted to the City Council involving full demolition and site clearance at Victoria Road School, and resolved to re-affirm our strong opposition to this revised proposal for total redevelopment of this site. We object to this revised planning application on the following grounds

Policy D4 – Aberdeen’s Granite Heritage

We have consistently maintained that the City Council, as the guardian of our granite heritage must stand up for Planning Policy D4 and not approve any demolition on this, or similar sites for that matter. It is our stated view that the Local Development Plan must be strengthened to ensure that there is a default to retention of granite buildings so that attention is fully focused on restoration and introduction of new uses. The City Council itself has demonstrated this sensitive approach so admirably at Marischal College where a world class example of the granite heritage fronts a new office building!

Policy R7 – Low and Zero Carbon Buildings

We re-affirm and strongly suggest that the more than adequate granite walls represents a structure that is sustainable and adaptable, and also presents a consider savings based on retention and adaption of the layout compared to complete and utter demolition.

The addition of heat- saving measures incorporated into a refit would ensure that the thermal performance of a granite building can come very close to those achieved in modern construction, save that the granite will outlast modern materials by many many generations

Policy D6 – Landscape and Policy NE5 - Trees and Woodlands

We remind the City Council that the Victoria Road school site contains a number of healthy, mature trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). We have photographs and records of this, and given the dwindling number of such trees, then every one of them should be retained as they provide a sense of place and location to the present setting.

The housing proposal as submitted would remove a number of the trees covered by TPOs and would no doubt be replaced by insensitive and inappropriate small trees. This should not be acceptable to anyone

Torry is a community

Torry is one of the oldest settlements in the North East with a recorded history of over one thousand years. It is not a dormitory suburb, and should this application be agreed, then the addition of more flats only erodes identity of the community that is Torry.

Please consider alternatives such as a local partnership with the community that would involve retention and conversion of these unique granite buildings which are local gems in the national crown of fine Victorian buildings. Retention enhances a source of local civic pride, whereas demolition is to impose an unwanted solution which does not fit into local need; it is merely a speculative housing development by a major house-builder. We respectfully must remind Members that a petition of some 2200 was presented to the City Council and supported a call for retention of the school buildings.

According to your own documents, Torry is a place of multiple deprivations as defined in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012, with well documented, specific needs. There are other potential future uses that would meet local needs and we request that they be considered and these include: -

- 1 Conversion into low-cost homes and/or offices for small businesses and social enterprises
- 2 A community hub with a focus on health and wellbeing, and the heritage of Torry
- 3 Restored as a school to alleviate the chronic overcrowding in our existing local primary schools

Conclusion

We request that any planning application that involves the demolition of the Victoria Road School buildings should not be approved by the City Council, and that immediate plans are progressed to retain and restore these fine buildings, saving a unique piece of the Victorian Granite heritage that is all that remains of the architectural and civic fabric of Old Torry. The alternative is to lose a set of beautiful buildings that are priceless and impossible to replace. Once you start to demolish, another piece of our history and heritage is lost forever!!!

We remain incredibly disappointed that low grade proposals outlined in this proposed development for the school site and adjoining land can be considered as sufficient reason to completely dis-regard the Planning Policy D4 for the protection of our granite heritage, and especially as this an important site within the catchment of Old Torry that holds great civic pride for the community of Torry, here and worldwide.

The value of our heritage is priceless and restored and maintained granite buildings will outlive many generations who will benefit from retention of these buildings. The time is now to save the granite heritage of Old Torry. Preserve the integrity and needs of Policy D4 and we request that the City Council, as planning authority rejects this (and any) scheme for demolition of the Victoria Road School buildings site.

Yours faithfully



David Fryer

Secretary

For and On Behalf of Torry Community Council

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