

Dear Mr Ferguson,

Planning Application 160727

Proposals in respect of former Toilet Block, High Street, Old Aberdeen

I write as a former resident of Old Aberdeen, having lived there from 2008 until 2015 while working on the two *Buildings of Scotland* volumes which together cover the North-East part of the country – the City and County of Aberdeen, Kincardineshire, Banffshire and Moray.

The site in question is of course one of great architectural sensitivity, standing as it does in the heart of the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area at the very top of the High Street. It is thus in immediate proximity to the Town House (George Jaffray, 1787-9; listed Category A), the Mercat Cross (earlier sixteenth century in origin, a scheduled monument) and other traditional buildings mostly of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their architectural and historic importance long since recognized by statutory listing. The entrance front of the existing toilet block is in pale ashlar granite, of good quality, but machine-cut and clearly twentieth century in its appearance, with a non-traditional flat roof; it has been shut up now for a considerable period.

It is good to see active thought being given to its re-use, and the applicants' proposal that it be heightened by a second storey rising into a wallhead gable in the manner of much older buildings in the Old Town is not without merit. However, in an environment characterized by the use of traditional materials, I would strongly recommend that the upper storey be clad in dark timber rather than proprietary metal cladding, that the doorway and windows should be timber rather than metal-framed, and that the pitched roof should be covered in slate or natural clay pantiles similar to those found on buildings nearby – see the Council's own *Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan* (2015), para 3.2.2 (pp. 29-30) and *Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Strategic Area and Management Plan* (2013), p. 13, concerning the use of appropriate materials. Within this context it is hard to justify the use of metal wall-cladding, metal-framed door and windows and a metal-clad roof, and the applicants have not to my knowledge provided any explanation in the form of a Design Statement (see 2013: p. 14).

It should be noted that in their Proposed Elevations and Details the vertical mullion of the entrance doorway is off-centre, where as in their Proposed Visual the mullion is centred, and relates much better to the central mullion of the first-floor window directly above.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) David W. Walker