

Report of Handling Detailed Planning Permission

160891: Extension to existing bar and restaurant to form boutique hotel accommodation, with all associated works at 11 Albyn Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1YE,

For: Aberdeen Hotel Holdings Ltd

Application Date:	5 July 2016
Officer:	Andrew Miller
Ward:	Hazlehead/Ashley/Queens Cross
Community Council:	Queen's Cross And Harlaw
Advertisement:	Development Affecting Character of Conservation Area
Advertised Date:	10 August 2016

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises The Albyn Bar and Restaurant, which is housed in a late Victorian detached granite villa on Albyn Place with a modern extension to the rear. It is located within the Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area and is adjacent to a B listed building (9 Albyn Place).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

Detailed planning permission is sought for an extension of the existing premises and a change of use to form a 41 bedroom hotel with bar and restaurant. The rear extension would comprise two storeys above and over-sailing the existing two storey extension to the rear, resulting in a four storey extension that would occupy almost the entire length of the site. In addition, there would be an extension at basement and ground floor levels (to the rear of the existing extension), with the remainder of the site functioning as undercroft parking and servicing area.

RELEVANT HISTORY

160862 – Removal of tree within Conservation Area granted consent 29 June 2016.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

All drawings and supporting documents listed below can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=ZZZY9GBZSK335>

- Planning Statement

- Drainage Statement

CONSULTATIONS

Consultee	Summary of Comments
ACC - Roads Development Management Team	No objection to development on following basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site falls close to City Centre boundary with good provision of public transport.• Loss of 2 parking spaces is acceptable in light of controlled parking zones around the development and sufficient car parking in city centre. 10 spaces shown in plans should be provided. A further reduction would not be acceptable.• Existing access, servicing and delivery arrangement should remain.
ACC - Flooding And Coastal Protection	Require following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drainage Impact Assessment• Confirmation that surface water drainage can be stored on site• Flood Risk Assessment
ACC - Environmental Health	Recommend conditions requiring: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Noise Impact Assessment to be undertaken to ascertain impact of development on neighbouring residents. The NIA should also consider the impact of existing noise sources on the development itself; and• A scheme for the extraction and filtration of cooking fumes. Advisory notes for construction hours also recommended.
Queen's Cross and Harlaw Community Council	No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

None

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy/Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)
Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (HESPS)
Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Extensions

Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP)

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B3 – West End Office Area
D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design
D4 – Historic Environment
T2 – Managing the Transport Impact of Development

OTHER RELEVANT MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Albyn Place and Rubislaw Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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 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. Section 59 of said act requires that, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, a planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The main considerations in this instance relate to the principle of the change of use from bar and restaurant to hotel; the design and siting of the alterations and subsequent impact on the Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area; impact of development on surrounding uses; and the servicing of the development (roads/drainage/waste).

Principle

The application site falls within an area designated as “West End Office Area” in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP). Associated policy B3 (West End Office Area) recognises its role in providing a high quality office location but does acknowledge that mix of uses in the area. It states that new development will only be acceptable where it does not result in an adverse impact on residential amenity of neighbouring uses.

The change of use of the building and an extension to form hotel/bar/restaurant use would not result in the loss of office space, having functioned as a bar and restaurant for some time and thus would not undermine the main use of the area. Accordingly it is considered the proposal would not conflict with the requirements of B3 in this respect, however consideration must be given to the suitability of the proposed extension in respect of design and siting.

Design and Siting

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Policy D1 of the ALDP states that all new development should ensure high standards of design and create a strong sense of place as a result of context appraisal, detailed planning, quality architecture, craftsmanship and materials. The site's location within the Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area also means that particular attention must be given to the proposal's impact on the designated surrounding historic context. Policy D4 states that high quality design that respects the character, appearance and setting of the historic environment and protects the special architectural interests of its conservation areas will be supported by the Council. Scottish Planning Policy also seeks to preserve or enhance the character of conservation areas and Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement echoes this requirement, noting the need to protect the special character of these areas.

The proposal includes an extension to the rear of the building, with little intervention to the front of the façade to Albyn Place. The proposed rear extension would result in the majority of the rear plot being redeveloped and would reach a height of 4 storeys, which would be a similar height to the ridge of the original building.

Historically, the buildings along the southern side of Albyn Place were residential with large enclosed rear gardens, many of which would have contained coach houses. Over the years, the use of the area has changed to commercial with a number of rear gardens having been given over to parking and rear extensions to support the changes to predominantly prestige office accommodation. Notwithstanding these changes, the distinct character of the lane is that of high rear boundary walls enclosing the curtilages, with a strong rear building line forming the tenements to Union Grove. It is noted that the rear of the neighbouring school contains a number of large extensions, including one wing that extends along the mutual boundary with the application site, but significantly lower in height. This however should not be seen as a precedent which justifies further large extensions, as it is a historic extension of its time set within the grounds of a school building. It does not act as a basis on which to frame the proposed extension.

Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance on extensions contains a number of principles, one of these being that extensions should play a subordinate role and not dominate the original building. Whilst there is scope for an extension/alteration to the rear of the premises, the scale and massing of the proposed extension is considered to be inappropriate in terms of its land take and overbearing volume of development within the site as well as impacting upon its neighbour to the immediate east. The plot coverage would be excessive, resulting in an overdevelopment of the rear of the building (to almost complete coverage) which coupled with its height would result in a significant intervention of built form at the rear of the building. The extension would be visible from Albyn Place, being wider than the original building, though views would be relatively constrained by the adjacent buildings.

The sheer height of the extension, immediately abutting Albyn Lane and the creation of a service/car park entrance would create an overbearing impact upon what is otherwise a relatively open lane. In addition, the provision of the undercroft area would create a dark/shadowed space which would be out of context with the area.

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Relative to its architectural appearance and material finishes, the extension would be a flat roofed with each hotel room containing a balcony. The materials have been specified within the Planning Statement accompanying the application to consist of aluminium panels, dark grey brick and timber cladding with areas of green/living wall to the elevations. The provision of living wall would create some degree of interest in the elevations, whilst the use of grey brick and panelling would in part echo the traditional granite buildings in the surrounding area. Nonetheless, this does not overcome the concerns with the inappropriate massing of the extension.

A tree within the site would be lost, though the removal of this has been consented via a separate application (160862).

Overall the proposals are considered to result in an overdevelopment of the site and would be out of context within the conservation area by virtue of its massing and resultant overbearing appearance, thus failing to conserve the character of the Conservation Area, and would fail to comply with policies D1 and D4 of the ALDP, as well as SPP and HESPS along with guidance contained within Managing Change in the Historic Environment.

Impact on Amenity of Surrounding Area

Policy B3 seeks to ensure that new development will not have an adverse impact on the existing amenity of residential properties. The proposed development would result in intensification of the use of the site compared with its current use – e.g. increased deliveries (e.g. laundry) and activity from hotel residents. The Council's Environmental Health team has noted the proximity of the development to tenement flats on Union Grove to the south of the proposed hotel and has recommended that conditions be placed with any grant of consent requiring a Noise Impact Assessment to be undertaken and details of ventilation/odour control to be agreed.

At 26 metres, the window to window distance of the extension to residential properties on Union Grove would exceed the minimum distance specified in Council Supplementary Guidance (18 metres).

Impact on Setting of Historic Assets

Policy D4 states that high quality design that respects the character, appearance and setting of the historic environment and protects the special architectural or historic interest of its listed buildings will be supported. 9 Albyn Place – a category 'B' listed classical villa – sits to the east of the application site and constitutes the only listed building in close proximity to the proposal. It is not considered that the proposal would impact negatively on the setting of this listed building. At present, the rear elevation of 9 Albyn Place is somewhat obscured from Albyn Lane, which, at this section, comprises existing substantial rear extensions, ancillary buildings and mature trees set within long, narrow feus, significantly limiting opportunity for appreciation 9 Albyn Place and its rear elevation. Thus, it is therefore considered that the proposal would not have a negative impact on the setting of 9 Albyn Place, given its already limited visibility from the south and taking account of the context within which the proposal would be located.

Servicing

The proposed development would contain a service yard in an undercroft area accessed at the rear from Albyn Lane with 10 parking spaces. Roads Development Management has raised no objections to the development, noting that there is a reduction in parking provision on site due to the extension but it is within a highly accessible location in close proximity to the city centre and its public transport links and public car parks. In this case the level of parking and service provision from the rear is considered acceptable for the edge of city centre location of the site.

Drainage

A drainage statement provided with the application states that there would be no change to the means of surface water drainage for the site, noting that the site would drain via a culvert to Albyn Lane, whilst foul drainage would discharge to a combined sewer on Albyn Place.

In responding to the proposals, the flooding team stated that a Drainage Impact Assessment be undertaken along with details of SuDS measures however given that there will be no increase in areas of hardstanding, it is considered the provision of a full DIA is not required.

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Whilst the proposed use of the premises as a hotel with bar and restaurant is considered acceptable in principle (complying with policy B3), the large scale and massing of the rear extension would overwhelm and dominate the rear of the traditional granite building, constituting overdevelopment and thus would be detrimental to the established character of the surrounding Albyn Place and Rubislaw Conservation Area.

In light of this it is considered the proposals are contrary to policies D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design) and D4 (Built Heritage) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017, as well as Scottish Planning Policy and Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement and guidance contained in Managing Change in the Historic Environment.