

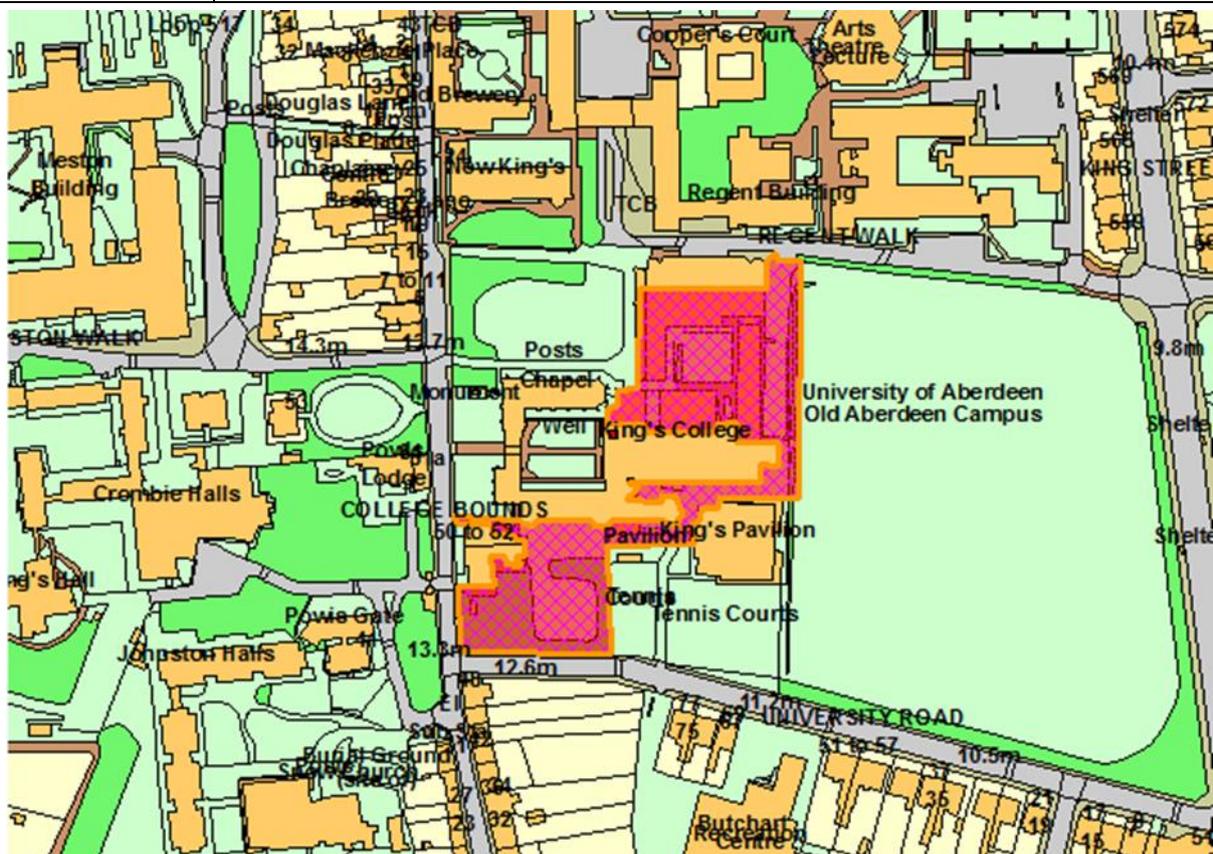


Planning Development Management Committee

Report by Development Management Manager

Committee Date: 17 June 2021

Site Address:	King's College, University of Aberdeen, College Bounds, Aberdeen, AB24 3SW
Application Description:	Erection of teaching and learning hall, removal of 1954 book stack extension and kitchen extension to old library (James MacKay Hall), external alterations of Cromwell Tower, Old Senate Wing, Elphinstone Hall Kitchen Extension, Linklater Rooms and 1921 book stack, formation of new teaching and learning spaces within existing buildings and associated public realm works
Application Ref:	201069/DPP
Application Type	Detailed Planning Permission
Application Date:	24 September 2020
Applicant:	The University of Aberdeen
Ward:	Tillydrone/Seaton/Old Aberdeen
Community Council:	Old Aberdeen
Case Officer:	Matthew Easton



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RECOMMENDATION

Approve conditionally

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The application relates to the King's College group of buildings located within the University of Aberdeen's Old Aberdeen campus. The site is centred around what is known as the 'King's College North Courtyard' and also known as the 'O'Dell Courtyard', named after the late Professor Andrew O'Dell who was the University's first Professor of Geography. The application also relates to land to the east of Luthulli House at 50-52 College Bounds, known as 'King's College Garden'.

The courtyard is formed by the following buildings which enclose it. All are category B listed as a group for their special architectural and historic interest.

- To the north is the northern section of Elphinstone Hall, a building that is of two-storey equivalent height (plus attic storey) and constructed from buff sandstone. It dates from 1931 and features a 1965 kitchen extension to the rear which forms the northern edge of the courtyard. The extension is single storey, with the taller hall sitting behind it.
- West of the courtyard is the Linklater Rooms which are contemporary with Elphinstone Hall. It features a cloister which faces onto Elphinstone Lawn and the High Street. The rooms are used primarily as reception and function spaces, benefiting from their position adjacent to the kitchen and the internal link to Elphinstone Hall.
- The south side features the bookstack and archive facility which dates from 1921, with an extension being completed in 1954 to form the current structure. It is constructed from a variety of granites, with narrow triple-height windows and a flat roof. It is used for archive storage but is understood to be no longer fit for purpose.
- The south side also features an extension of the James Mackay Hall which forms part of the King's College Conference Centre (KCCC) and dates from around 1880. It was converted into a kitchen in the 1990s.
- The Old Senate Wing sits on the eastern side of the courtyard. Constructed around 1956, it is two-storeys high and finished in dressed red sandstone masonry, with a steeply pitched slate roof. Its eastern elevation faces onto the King's Playing Fields and it is bookended by gable elevations of Elphinstone Hall at one end and the KCCC at the other. It accommodates archive storage which is no longer fit for purpose, unused office space and the former senate room which is used as a Moot Court by the Law School.
- The Cromwell Tower is situated to the south west corner of the courtyard. It was built in the 1660s as dormitory accommodation and converted to teaching space in the 1700s. It was rebuilt internally in the 1820s, when an observatory and stair tower were added. It is a square tower constructed from rusticated stone. It continues to be used as teaching space, although the observatory is unused and there is poor accessibility to the upper floors. The Cromwell Tower also partially forms the north east corner of the King's College Quadrangle.

The courtyard itself can be accessed from the north east corner via a path between Elphinstone Hall and the Old Senate Wing or alternatively from the south west corner via a passage between the Linklater Rooms and the Cromwell Tower. It features a lawn with gravel perimeter path, areas of shrubs, a single ornamental cherry tree and three dwarf conifers. The eastern edge of the courtyard beside the James Mackay Hall kitchen is used for the storage of waste bins.

Between the Old Senate Wing and the King's Pavilion Playing Fields is a car park with 22 spaces immediately adjacent to the Old Senate Wing, and the area is also used for the storage of waste bins.

The application site also includes an area of open space located behind 50-52 College Bounds south of the King's College Quadrangle. It is enclosed by walls along its boundaries with University Road, College Bounds and adjacent tennis courts. It is mostly covered by grass and features several mature trees and cycle storage facilities.

The nearby King's College Chapel and Bishop Elphinstone Memorial are category A listed buildings. The application site and wider area lie within the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area.

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

Detailed planning permission is sought for the erection of a teaching and learning hall which would largely occupy the space currently forming the northern courtyard.

The proposed teaching and learning hall, known as 'King's Quarter' is to create a new focal point and main entrance for the University's Old Aberdeen campus. It seeks to enhance the use of the central area around King's College and provide modern accommodation through the reconfiguration of spaces to support the teaching and learning programmes. Accessibility and connectivity between spaces is to be improved. This is to benefit both visitors and students.

The proposal is made possible following the development of the Sir Duncan Rice Library resulting in the archive storage facilities around King's College, as described above, becoming surplus to requirements.

Teaching and Learning Hall

To enable the construction of the learning hall, the book stack extension and James Mackay Hall kitchen extension would be demolished. The four trees and other vegetation would be removed from the courtyard.

The space which forms the courtyard would be internalised within a new structure that would be two storeys in height, creating 1,925sqm of floor space. It would feature a central flexible space within an atrium which would be used for events and presentations. The structure would also provide circulation space around the atrium which would provide access to each of the surrounding buildings, allowing them to be brought back into use as modernised and flexible teaching and learning spaces, principally through the reconfiguration of the Old Senate Wing and space currently occupied by the bookstack extension. Improved access would also be provided to Elphinstone Hall and the Linklater Rooms.

The courtyard facades of the buildings surrounding the courtyard would remain exposed as a feature of the new internal space. The learning hall would feature a timber structure above its double height space which would protrude above the rest of the roof of the second floor, allowing light into the hall. At this level two mechanical plant rooms (east and south) would be formed. They would be finished in a grey metal cladding.

A new external court accessed from the existing passage between Linklater Rooms and Cromwell Tower, would lead to the west entrance, formed in curtain wall glazing. The lobby and circulation spaces would feature social learning space and a new stair leading to the first floor which would

occupy the space created following the removal of the James Mackay Hall kitchen. This stair and nearby lift would provide access to the Cromwell Tower. Internal alterations to the Cromwell Tower involve the removal of internal partitions to provide more open learning spaces and form a corridor in the south connecting to a new access stair, these works would be covered by the listed building consent.

To integrate the new structure into the surrounding buildings various alterations are proposed, including alterations to existing openings, and integration of the roofs of each building. New clear storey glazing forming the learning hall would be suspended down onto the wallheads of the existing buildings around the courtyard.

New Entrance

On the east elevation of the Old Senate Wing, a large opening would be formed between two existing windows at ground floor to create a new entrance and reception area for the University. A freestanding entrance podium with canopy would be erected which would incorporate steps, ramp and benching. To accommodate the entrance and permit the associated alterations to the public realm, the adjacent car park would be reduced to four accessible spaces, with a drop-off area created.

Garden at 50-52 College Bounds

A new outdoor focal point would be created within the area to the rear of 50-52 College Bounds. A hard-landscaped area formed in resin bound gravel would be provided with concrete and timber benches. Ten flowering cherry trees would be planted around the seating area. A new covered cycle storage area would be provided. This seeks to offset any loss arising from the removal of the north courtyard, although it is understood that the north courtyard sees little use.

Amendments

Post submission the application has been amended to –

- reduce the height of the learning hall roof by 0.55m.
- reduce the extent of hardstanding within the garden behind 50-52 College Bounds.
- windows within the existing buildings are to be retained and refurbished rather than replaced.

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=QGFQCXBZKBQ00>

- Archaeology Statement
- Bat Survey Report
- Demolition Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Drainage Assessment
- Heritage Statement
- Heritage Statement Addendum (Demolition Statement)
- Planning Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Transport Statement
- Travel Plan
- Tree Survey Report
- Window and Door Survey

Reason for Referral to Committee

The application has been referred to the Planning Development Management Committee because it has attracted six or more objections and the community council for the area has raised concerns with the proposal.

CONSULTATIONS

ACC - Environmental Health – No response

ACC - Roads Development Management Team – No objection.

Accessibility – The site is well-placed and well-equipped for access by pedestrians and cyclists and is well served by a variety of regular buses within the desired 400m distance.

The applicant is proposing to increase the existing cycle parking provision from 16 to 34 spaces – an increase of 18. A condition should be attached requiring further details of the cycle parking and associated shower facilities.

Access and traffic – Access and servicing arrangements would remain unaffected and there are only minimal changes to the internal road layout. It is not anticipated that these works would have any impact on the local road network.

Car Parking – Based on figures provided by the applicant the site currently has 892 parking spaces out of a maximum requirement of 1,944 (a relative shortfall of 54%) and it is understood that there is only a small amount of this is student parking, resulting in the shortfall actually being ~30% for staff and ~100% for students.

The aims of Policy T2 and T3 to prioritise sustainable travel measures over use of the private car must be considered however they are based on sustainable measures being robust enough to warrant a reduction in parking. Campus-wide there is a shortfall in cycle parking relative to ACC standards of 80%. Therefore, ACC Roads disagree with the applicant's stance that there is no requirement for additional car parking, especially with the removal of further parking. This lack of parking does not necessarily encourage all students to use more sustainable modes, but rather may encourage students to park on the periphery of the controlled parking zone, as close to the university as they can for free, shifting parking from the campus to surrounding roads.

There have been multiple university applications in the last few years, all of which increase the university facilities, without additional parking, and often reducing parking. Each time it is stated that each new facility / change of use will not generate new students or staff and therefore no new parking is required. This slowly erodes the existing parking, prevents the addition of further parking, and prevents any large-scale meaningful improvements to the campuses' sustainable infrastructure, as no individual application is large enough in scale to warrant any changes.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that outwith this application, the university should undertake a campus-wide assessment of their facilities, identifying shortfalls in parking, cycle parking, etc, as well as highlighting future proposed works. This is essential to allow future applications to make incremental improvements towards a larger goal. Without this, ACC Roads would be unlikely to support any future applications which do not provide new parking spaces commensurate with the proposals, and particularly would not allow any loss of further parking spaces.

The university has an ongoing Travel Plan which will be in place until 2023. This aims to reduce carbon emissions from commuting by staff and students, by 25% from 2016 levels before 2022. The contents of this travel plan are acceptable. The university may consider the 2023 update of this

travel plan as being larger in scope than previous iterations, incorporating the changes suggested in this document – i.e. a wider look at parking, cycle parking, students parking off-campus, future work proposals (their size and location) and how this will affect existing parking further.

Parking standards necessitate 0.5 spaces per staff member and 1 space per 15 students, which isn't directly linked to floor space, and any increases due to new facilities would not be immediate, but it could be assumed that works to increase floor space will provide more capacity for a future increase in students. There are currently 18 parking spaces. The new entrance pavilion to the East will result in the loss of a further 14 spaces – meaning 4 usable spaces will remain. The applicant states "*there is no requirement for additional car parking over and above what is already provided on campus*" however ACC Roads do not entirely agree with this as explained above.

Whilst it is generally undesirable to lose further parking, the most recent (pre-Covid) parking survey suggests that there is scope for these spaces to be removed whilst still providing enough staff parking to cater for the current demand.

ACC - Waste and Recycling – No objection. The development is classified as commercial and therefore receives a business waste collection. Business premises need to be provided with a bin store to allocate, within the property, the waste and recycling bins.

Aberdeen International Airport – No objection. The proposed development does not conflict with airport safeguarding criteria.

Archaeology Service (Aberdeenshire Council) – No objection. To safeguard and record the archaeological potential of the area it is requested that a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works be attached to any grant of planning permission.

Historic Environment Scotland – No objection. HES's locus is specific to the potential impact on the setting of category A listed buildings: King's College Chapel which encloses the north side of the B listed principal quadrangle and sits next to the B listed Cromwell Tower and Bishop Elphinstone Memorial, located outside the west front of King's College Chapel. The chapel is the oldest, most significant, building at the heart of King's College, occupying a central position within the B listed King's College group and wider context of Old Aberdeen.

HES considers that the more formal principal King's College Quadrangle and Elphinstone Lawn Quadrangle, are important to the setting of the chapel, it is of the view that the O'Dell courtyard garden is of lesser significance to its setting, due to its more hidden, incidental and altered character. Provided the proposed atrium hall is sufficiently concealed within the courtyard space and does not unduly disturb the ridgeline of the surrounding buildings, notably the Linklater Rooms, HES is satisfied that the setting of the Chapel and its primacy would not be unduly disturbed.

HES note the reduction in height of the proposed atrium hall so that it would be well concealed in significant views from the west, including a range of views from Meston Walk. It has reviewed the amended drawings and revised/additional visualisations and is content that the atrium hall would be sufficiently concealed behind the Linklater Rooms, and would not unduly disturb the setting and primacy of the A listed Chapel. While there is no reduction in the height of the proposed plant room roofing adjoining the Old Senate Wing inner roof on the east side of the courtyard, HES is satisfied that, it too, would be sufficiently concealed in views from the west, due to its greater setback position and proposed grey anodised cladding which is intended to match the colour of the natural slate roofing as closely as possible.

Due to its location at the west front of the Chapel, HES are content that there would be no adverse impact on the setting of the Bishop Elphinstone Memorial.

HES's view is that the proposals do not raise historic environment issues of national significance and therefore does not object. However, HES's decision not to object should not be taken as support for the proposals.

Old Aberdeen Community Council – Supports the university's need to modernise buildings that are underused due to dated design and it is acknowledged that this proposal would bring much better use to the historic heart of Kings College. It is also understood that internal modification and the limited demolition of two extensions would be necessary to efficiently deliver those aims. The careful modification of underused buildings in preference to the creation of a new building elsewhere on the university estate is supported, though they are disappointed that the submitted proposals would result in the loss of the (little used) O'Dell Memorial Garden. However, the interaction between the various new elements and the existing structures is considered to be unsympathetic and does not adequately address the heritage imperatives of this key site (as outlined below). The University should re-consider their concept.

Loss of the O'Dell Memorial Garden – While people have raised concern that the memorial garden could be lost, we note that the memorial has remained in place for some 54 years and that a memorial should rarely be considered sacrosanct for all time (there is still an O'Dell Memorial Prize in Geography awarded each year that honours the professor). However, the loss of a quiet green space within the campus is a more fundamental loss. The new garden at College Bounds would not provide the same calm space, particularly once the adjacent tennis court is converted to a multi-sport facility. While it is acknowledged that the garden gets little footfall, this must be at least partly due to the access gates having been frequently locked until very recently.

New East Entrance – The new entrance on the east of elevation of the Old Senate Wing is a logical and desirable addition. However, it is profoundly underwhelming and of unsuitable design.

West Entrance to the New Hall – The only new section of wall visible to the public would be the west entrance which would fill the gap between the Linklater Rooms and King's College and be readily visible. This 'assertive contrast' using modern glass and metal is unlikely to sit well in juxtaposition with the surrounding listed buildings. How much better if the stonework from the Book Stack Extension could be used to close off this gap in a more sympathetic manner.

Light Pollution – As night falls, Kings College, as seen from the High Street and Elphinstone Lawn, presents a seemingly timeless tableau of academia – even if some of the buildings are less than a hundred years old. There would be very significant light output from the new west entrance, spilling out onto the lawn, which may well eclipse the gentle lighting within the cloisters. Further, as a clearstory level of windows is proposed immediately below the learning hall roof structure, there would be significant light pollution above and to the right of the Linklater roofline.

REPRESENTATIONS

Fifty letters of representations have been received, all objecting to the application, including from the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, Old Aberdeen Heritage Society, Saltire Society and Scottish Civic Trust. Many of the representations are from staff or graduates of the University. The matters raised are summarised as follows –

Impact on conservation area

1. The various buildings may be of varying ages but display a commonality due to their robust masonry construction and sympathetic architecture. Contemporary design or materials such as steel and glass are not appropriate in a historic area or compatible with the surrounding buildings and failing to comply with Policy D1.
2. The roof of the proposals sits above the roof ridge of the Linklater Rooms and would have an adverse visual impact from the High Street, Meston Walk, Elphinstone Lawn and New Kings. It would affect the setting of the King's College Chapel.
3. The proposal would have an adverse impact on the historical significance of the conservation area and there would be a visual impact on local townscape.
4. Proposals do not comply with the 1993 Old Aberdeen Conservation Area Appraisal.
5. Views of the Cromwell Tower would be interrupted.
6. Spaces between buildings, such as the courtyard, are as important as the buildings and if it were to be infilled it would disrupt the special character of the area.
7. The proposals are comparatively modern, but design is traditional and in keeping with surroundings.

Direct Impact on listed buildings

8. Alterations to the Old Senate Wing, including the new entrance, are not in keeping with it and would destroy its character.
9. Alterations to create doors on the Linklater Rooms and Elphinstone Hall extension would detract from their character.
10. There is a lack of information on the changes to the Cromwell Tower. The proposals for the Cromwell Tower are particularly destructive.

Loss of courtyard (O'Dell Garden)

11. The courtyard must be retained in its entirety. Whether it was designed intentionally or accidentally created over time is irrelevant in justifying its removal.
12. The courtyard provides an area for quiet contemplation and its status as a memorial to Professor O'Dell should be respected. The ashes of former students are scattered there, and its loss would be upsetting for families.

Demolition

13. No existing buildings should be demolished, particularly those that are listed.
14. Demolition of the bookstack represents the destruction of the ultimate example of Aberdeen's style of granite buildings and is a contravention of ACC's stated aims of preserving the city's unique heritage. It should be retained and restored. Its removal should be treated as demolition rather than an alteration in terms of assessment against demolition policy.
15. The John MacKay Hall kitchen extension should be retained.

Natural heritage

16. The trees should be retained and have cultural value.
17. The replacement garden at 50—52 College Bounds would in no way replace the O'Dell Garden.

Other

18. The proposal is contrary to the Community Plan.
19. The project brief and design should be revisited. The proposals take no account of the shift to blended and online learning.
20. No consideration has been given to alternative sites. There are alternative locations that could be used within King's College or wider campus.
21. The proposals would not create any economic benefit or attract students.
22. The creation of new space when existing space could be used is not sustainable.
23. The chapel's vestry would be lost and is an essential facility.
24. There would be excessive noise and acoustic problems within the atrium.
25. There would be a loss of privacy for surrounding buildings and within the building itself.
26. There would be a loss of light to the buildings surrounding the courtyard because of it being infilled.
27. The use of glass would cause problems with solar gain, cleaning and snow.

Administrative

28. Proper Neighbour notification has not been carried out by the University.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

- 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 59(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 places a duty on planning authorities when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to 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.
- Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997

requires the planning authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- Scottish Planning Policy was approved on 18 December 2020. In February 2021, a Judicial Review of the decision of the Scottish Ministers on 18 December 2020 to amend Scottish Planning Policy (2014) as set out in 'Scottish Planning Policy Finalised Documents' and to publish 'Planning Advice Note 1/2020' was lodged with the Court of Session. As it stands, SPP2020 remains in place and is a relevant consideration in the determination of all planning applications.
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS)
- Interim Guidance on the Designation of Conservation Areas and Conservation Area Consent
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Demolition of Listed Buildings
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Extensions
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Roofs
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Windows

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)

- Policy CF1 (Existing Community Sites and Facilities)
- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design)
- Policy D2 (Landscape)
- Policy D4 (Historic Environment)
- Policy D5 (Our Granite Heritage)
- Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development)
- Policy T3 (Sustainable and Active Travel)
- Policy NE3 (Urban Green Space)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands)
- Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality)
- Policy R6 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development)

Supplementary Guidance and Technical Advice Notes

- The Repair and Replacement of Windows and Doors
- Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance
- Trees and Woodlands

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)

The Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (Proposed ALDP) was approved at the Council meeting of 2 March 2020. A period of representation in public was undertaken from May to August 2020. The Proposed ALDP constitutes the Council's settled view as to what the final content of the next adopted ALDP should be, and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 will continue to be the primary document against which applications are considered. 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 –

- such matters have or have not received representations as a result of the period of representations in public for the Proposed ALDP;

- the level of representations received in relation to relevant components of the Proposed ALDP and their relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The foregoing can only be assessed on a case by case basis.

- Policy CF1 (Existing Community Sites and Facilities)
- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- Policy D4 (Landscape)
- Policy D5 (Landscape Design)
- Policy D6 (Historic Environment)
- Policy D7 (Our Granite Heritage)
- Policy D8 (Windows and Doors)
- Policy NE2 (Green & Blue Infrastructure)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)
- Policy R5 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development)
- Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy T3 (Parking)

Other Material Considerations

- Old Aberdeen Conservation Area Appraisal

EVALUATION

Principle of Development

Land Use Zoning

The site is in an area zoned for existing community sites and facilities, where Policy CF1 applies. It indicates that “*existing further education and research institute sites shall be used mainly for these purposes. Proposals for new or extended uses of these types on these sites will be supported in principle. Where land or buildings become surplus to current or anticipated future requirements, alternative uses which are compatible with adjoining uses and any remaining community uses, will be permitted in principle.*”

The university has explained that the Old Senate Wing and book stacks were designed to provide archive book storage to the then adjacent old library (now the James Mackay Hall and King’s College Conference Centre (KCCC)). The relocation of the library to Bedford Road (to the Queen Mother Library in 1964 and then again in 2011 to the Sir Duncan Rice Library) has left these remnant archive stores remote and out of place in the campus. To maintain the condition of the archived material and to allow for its easy retrieval a new central archive facility has been established – freeing up the existing archive spaces of King’s College for repurposing.

The proposal is focused on repurposing the remaining buildings and reconfiguring the spaces to allow better accessibility and to support the university’s teaching and learning programmes. It would also enable improved community engagement and provide an improved environment for visitors through the provision of a new reception area and presentation space. These proposals would retain the buildings within higher educational use, and therefore there would be no tension with Policy CF1. The repurposing of underused space within historic buildings is welcomed as part of the evolution of the Old Aberdeen campus.

Need for Development

Several representations suggest that the university do not need the space; the development would not provide the type of space required; the creation of the space is not sustainable; alternative schemes or sites have not been considered and the scheme would not generate any economic benefit or attract students (*issues 19, 20, 21, 22, 28 and 29 in representations*).

Ordinarily, it is not for the Planning Service to question the need for a development; it is for the university to decide what floor space it requires and how it utilises it within the confines of the authorised planning use or how it considers it best to enhance its offer. Moreover, the Planning Service is required to consider the application submitted, rather than any hypothetical alternative that may or may not be feasible. Notwithstanding, where detrimental impact on the historic environment is unavoidable, HEPS indicates that it should be demonstrated that alternatives have been explored. In this case however, it is considered there would be no detrimental impact on the historic environment, so there is no requirement for this to be undertaken.

Nevertheless, as part of their submission, the university has explained the rationale behind its proposals and demonstrated that it has indeed considered several alternative options. A key objective of the proposal is to repurpose the historic buildings to create a greater sense of place at the heart of the campus and bring the existing underused buildings back into more productive use. The university considers that proposals balance the retention of the historic buildings whilst allowing the creation of high quality, flexible teaching space which is currently lacking. The university emphasises that the new facilities as proposed would help attract students and staff, for which it competes at an international level.

In terms of alternatives, eight sites within the campus were considered and details of these are included within Appendix 3 of the Design and Access Statement. It explains that the rejected options were all at a disadvantage by the requirement for significant decant and relocation of existing university accommodation. Many options were too remote from the centre of the campus, and/or their locations were not suitable for a new facility aimed at allowing fully accessible and social learning. Several options added significant new floor area to the existing campus whilst many buildings on the campus are underutilised and/or in need of refurbishment. Therefore, the preference was for appropriate repurposing of existing buildings over creating new buildings. The university contend that the new facilities represent a sustainable and responsible approach to development and would create important accommodation within the heart of the historic setting.

Loss of courtyard

A significant number of representations raised concern with the loss of the courtyard and four trees in terms of their status as a memorial, both in terms of Professor O'Dell and noting that ashes have been scattered there (*issues 11, 12 and 16 in representations*).

Whilst it is appreciated that the removal of a memorial will evoke strong emotions, it is not a material planning consideration. It is for the university to decide how it chooses to commemorate individuals rather than a matter for the planning system. The university has indicated that Professor O'Dell continues to be honoured through the annual O'Dell Memorial Prize in Geography. It is aware of three individuals who had their ashes scattered in the courtyard and will endeavour to contact their families.

It is acknowledged that the proposals would result in a loss of a quiet green space. Policy NE3 (Urban Green Space) indicates that permission will not be granted to redevelop areas of urban green space (including smaller spaces not identified on the LDP Proposals Map) for any use other than recreation and sport. Exceptions will be made when an equivalent and equally convenient and accessible area for public space is laid out and made available in the locality.

In this case any area of space at 50/52 College Bounds would be enhanced through the provision of additional tree planting and hard landscaping included seating. This space would be more readily accessible than the courtyard.

Policy NE3 goes on to say development will only be acceptable provided that:

1. *There is no significant loss to the landscape character and amenity of the site and adjoining area;*

By virtue of being enclosed, the courtyard does not have any significant landscape character on the wider area. Its loss would have a very localised impact.

2. *Public access is either maintained or enhanced;*

The enhanced space at 50-52 College Bounds would be publicly accessible.

3. *The site is of no significant wildlife or heritage value;*

The courtyard has limited wildlife or heritage value.

4. *There is no loss of established or mature trees;*

Four trees exist within the courtyard which do contribute to its character. However, they cannot be seen outwith it and therefore their contribution to the wider character of the campus is limited. The loss of these trees is considered in more detail later in the report.

5. *Replacement green space of similar or better quality is located in or immediately adjacent to the same community, providing similar or improved health benefits to the replaced area and is accessible to that community, taking into account public transport, walking and cycling networks and barriers such as major roads.*

The replacement space is considered acceptable in terms of its location approximately 90m away from the courtyard. Although it may not be as enclosed as the courtyard, it still offers a quieter space away from main thoroughfares along College Bounds and Elphinstone Lawn.

6. *They do not impact detrimentally on lochs, ponds, watercourses or wetlands in the vicinity of the development; and*

None of these features are present in the courtyard or vicinity.

7. *Proposals to develop outdoor sports facilities, including playing fields and sports pitches should also be consistent with the terms of Scottish Planning Policy.*

The proposal does not relate to outdoor sports facilities

In summary, whilst it is accepted that there would be the loss of green space, it would be compensated for by provision of enhanced space elsewhere in the campus. Although the alternative space is not directly comparable, the loss of the space would be outweighed by the benefit of the proposal which would allow a greater benefit to be realised by repurposing the existing buildings around the courtyard (*issue 17 in representations*).

The loss of the courtyard in the context of its impact on the conservation area and listed buildings is dealt with later in the report.

Local Outcome Improvement Plan

Concern is raised that the proposal is contrary to the Community Plan (now known as the Local Outcome Improvement Plan or LOIP) (*issue 18 in representations*). Although the LOIP can be a material consideration, it is not a land-use planning document and little of its outcomes can be used directly in the assessment of a planning application. Generally however, it is considered that the proposal to provide enhanced education facilities and bring underused historic buildings back into use does not create tension with the LOIP vision ‘*to make Aberdeen a place where all people can prosper*’.

Impact on Conservation Area and Setting of Listed Buildings

Policy D4 (Historic Environment) indicates that the Council will protect, preserve and enhance the historic environment in line with Scottish Planning Policy, Scottish Historic Environment Policy (superseded by Historic Environment Policy for Scotland) and its own supplementary guidance and conservation area character appraisals and management plans. 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 and conservation areas will be supported.

Scottish Planning Policy (paragraphs 141 and 143) reflects the legislative requirements in relation to conservation areas and listed buildings set out in the Material Considerations part of this report. SPP requires that, where planning permission is sought for development affecting a listed building, special regard must be given to the importance of preserving and enhancing the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest. Proposals for development within conservation areas which will impact on its appearance, character or setting, should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. Proposals that do not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area should be treated as preserving its character or appearance.

Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) is the Government’s national policy statement on built heritage and sits alongside SPP. Historic Environment Scotland’s guidance on managing change is also relevant.

Many third parties who have submitted representations believe that no change should occur either to the courtyard or to the buildings surrounding it. That position is however at odds with national policy on the historic environment which acknowledges that some change is inevitable and that it can be necessary for places to thrive. Fundamentally, both national and local policy on the historic environment is aimed at managing change, rather than preventing it from occurring.

HES’s guidance on determining listed building consent applications indicates that “*the majority of listed buildings are adaptable and have met the needs of successive generations while retaining their character. Change should therefore be managed to protect a building’s special interest while enabling it to remain in active use. Each case must be judged on its own merits but in general terms listing rarely prevents adaptation to modern requirements but ensures that work is done in a sensitive and informed manner.*” It goes on to caution however that “*Once lost listed buildings cannot be replaced. They can be robbed of their special interest either by inappropriate alteration or by demolition. There is, therefore, a presumption against demolition or other works that adversely affect the special interest of a listed building or its setting.*”

It is in the context of the above policies that the proposals are considered in more detail below.

King’s College

The Old Aberdeen Conservation Character Appraisal produced in 2015 (superseding the 1993 version – *issue 4 in representations*) describes King's College Chapel and surrounding King's College quadrangle group of buildings as one of the two centrepieces of the conservation area (accompanying St Machar's Cathedral), observing that this collection of iconic buildings has come to symbolise the long educational tradition of the university. It goes on to note that apart from the chapel, little remains of Bishop Elphinstone's original university buildings on site, which were grouped together as a quadrangle. Except for the 1525 Round Tower and the 1658 Cromwell Tower, many of the earlier buildings in the quad were replaced in the 19th century. King's College is noted as being set back from College Bounds, giving space to appreciate the complex; the break in the building lines on either side of College Bounds at this point, together with the landscaped setting and gardens, creating a focal sense of space inviting appreciation. King's College can also be seen across the playing fields from King Street and at various points on University Road. The buildings are identified as being outstanding iconic buildings and alongside their setting are noted as being a strength of the conservation area. The visual impact of new development on the heart of Old Aberdeen is identified as both as a threat and an opportunity.

It is clear from the history of King's College that the group of buildings have continuously evolved over time, with the current arrangement within the courtyard only being established in the 1960s, as part of significant redevelopment within the campus through the 20th century that included the construction of New Kings in 1913 and both the construction in c1900 of the Professor's Manse on Elphinstone Lawn and its subsequent demolition prior to 1914. For the buildings surrounding the courtyard to remain relevant and in productive use, appropriately considered change continues to be required. These proposals represent the next stage in the evolution of the buildings as a key part of the Old Aberdeen campus.

Demolition

Demolition of Bookstack Extension

For the purpose of assessing the removal of the bookstack extension it is considered that the work constitutes demolition (defined as a total or substantial loss of a building, rather than simply being an alteration) in terms of Historic Environment Scotland's (HES) guidance on the Demolition of Listed Buildings. As such, the applicant has submitted a Demolition Statement as an addendum to their Heritage Statement which contends that the bookstack is not of special interest.

The bookstack was constructed in 1954 as an extension to the 1921 bookstack extension. Architecturally it reflects the earlier part to which it is attached, featuring a simple structure and design reflecting its use, an approach which was not unusual for the time.

The building is a simple form, related to its purpose and location as an archive extension to a library located on a rear elevation. It is not by a notable architect and has limited architectural interest. The only feature of note is the use of a combination of granites from different quarries on its external elevations, including ashlar dressed blocks to window margins and Aberdeen bond. However, it represents a late use of granite and there are better examples of mixed granite use in buildings of the same period found elsewhere which are more prominent, such as the university's Meston Building and houses on Tillydrone Avenue. The building is detrimental to the setting of the buildings around the courtyard as it conceals views of surrounding buildings and covers the façade of the original bookstack extension from 1921.

The university did consider the retention of the bookstack extension, however it advises that the opportunities created by removing it, including the potential to create clear desire lines for pedestrians and open up views of Cromwell Tower, meant that its retention would be at the expense of wider benefits to the listed buildings and the aims of the project. The Planning Service is aware of alleged unauthorised works relating to the windows of the building which are said to have taken

place at some point in the last 20 years, however this is not considered to be of significance in the assessment of the current proposals and even if the original windows were intact it would not alter the decision. The matter is being investigated separately.

It is considered that the bookstack extension does not possess the same special architectural or historic interest as the main buildings within the group listing. The benefits of allowing its removal are significant, therefore its removal to allow the proposal to go ahead is considered acceptable (*issues 14 in representations*).

Demolition of James Mackay Kitchen Extension

The removal of the James Mackay kitchen extension is also considered to constitute demolition. The extension is a small L-shaped single storey flat roofed building located to the rear of the James Mackay Hall, which is part of the King's College Conference Centre. It infills a corner between the 1921 Bookstack extension, the principal front block of the KCCC and the Cromwell Tower. The structure has experienced successive alterations, with it being difficult to establish its exact original fabric or plan form. It is thought it combines a store from the 1860s and later lavatory block from the late 19th century. It was converted into an open plan kitchen to serve the James Mackay Hall in the 1990s. It is a simple structure with no architectural features of note. Taking this into account it is considered that the extension does not contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the main group of listed buildings. Therefore, its removal to allow the proposal to go ahead is considered acceptable. (*issues 15 in representations*).

In summary, in accordance with HES guidance on demolition, it has been demonstrated that these elements of the listed buildings are not of special architectural or historic interest. Their removal would have a neutral impact on the character of King's College and would allow the remaining, more significant buildings to be repurposed and integrated into the new space. It would also allow concealed elevations which have greater significance to be revealed, enhancing the appreciation of the buildings (*issue 13 in representations*).

Layout and design

Infilling of courtyard

The northern courtyard came into existence in the 1950s with the completion of the Old Senate Wing. Its form was later altered in the 1960s with the addition of the Elphinstone Hall kitchen extension. Although not a significant factor in this assessment, it is worth noting that the courtyard differs from others within the campus, such as the King's College Quadrangle and Elphinstone Lawn, which have primary or more significant building elevations surrounding them. Rather, the north courtyard is formed from the secondary/rear elevations of the buildings which surround it. They are of lesser importance than their primary elevations which face outwards into the campus. By virtue of being within the courtyard, they also have significantly less visual prominence.

Whilst spaces around buildings can be just as important as the buildings themselves, the courtyard is not a significant space in relation to the historic development of Kings College or the wider Old Aberdeen campus and its contribution towards the setting of the listed building group to which it relates is minimal. There are no significant views into or out of the courtyard. It is considered that the space does not contribute to the special interest of the listed building group or the wider conservation area to any great extent (*issue 6 in representations*). It is acknowledged that views out of the windows of the surrounding buildings into the courtyard would be significantly altered; ground floor windows which are currently external would become internal or in the case of upper floors of the Cromwell Tower, would look down onto the roof of the new structure. However, for the reasons already explained in this section, it is not considered that the change in what can be seen from these buildings would adversely affect the appreciation of these buildings, this is especially so for the

upper floors, where views already look out over roofs, some of which accommodate mechanical plant.

At present each of the buildings surrounding the courtyard are independently accessed. The introduction of the learning hall and associated circulatory space around it allows the buildings to be integrated into one connected space and brought back into productive use. This allows the floorspace within the existing buildings to be put to the most efficient use as circulation would take place largely within the new structure rather than the existing buildings. These connections would allow the new space to function collaboratively with Elphinstone Hall, the Linklater Rooms and James Mackay Hall.

The benefits which the proposal would bring are considered to justify the loss of the courtyard in its current form. There would be a neutral impact on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and character of the conservation area.

Layout and architecture

The proposed learning hall has been designed so that it is a freestanding structure offset from the elevations of the buildings which form the courtyard. The hall would be connected to the existing buildings through glazed structures so that the elevations of the existing buildings which are external at present, would still be visible and able to be appreciated if the courtyard was internalised as proposed.

For a variety of reasons concern is raised with the use of glass (*issue 27 in representations*). However, the use of curtain wall glazing and that of glass in building design is well established. Whilst it is noted that representations express an aversion to the use of modern materials in an historic context, national policy indicates that this concept is a legitimate one, subject to suitable design. In respect of the proposal, the steel structure and curtain wall glazing would provide a simple structure which would represent a contemporary intervention in the group of buildings. It has been designed as to be distinctively different from the existing buildings and would provide a suitable deferential contrast with its surroundings which is considered acceptable (*issues 1 and 7 in representations*). Any matters relating to solar gain or glass strength would be covered by building warrant or would be matters for the university and architect to resolve rather than being planning considerations. The windows and roof area would be fully accessible for cleaning and maintenance.

Alterations to accommodate a lift and staircase to serve the Cromwell Tower would take place in the location of the removed James Mackay kitchen extension. Whilst this part of the tower's elevation would still be enclosed, it would have a lesser impact than the existing extension, as the tower's original walls would be revealed, which at present are concealed behind the extension. The removal of the bookstack extension would also allow the tower to be better appreciated. Therefore, it is considered the proposals would enhance the setting of the Cromwell Tower (*issue 5 in representations*). The Planning Service is aware of alleged unauthorised works relating to the turret of the tower which are said to have taken place at some point in the last 20 years, however this is not considered to be of significance in the assessment of this proposal (*issue 10 in representations*). To allow the integration of the new structure and the existing buildings, several alterations are required to the existing buildings, largely related to the creation of openings within existing walls and incorporation of the new and old roof structures. These alterations have been carefully considered so that any removal of building fabric is kept to a minimum. The setting of the surrounding buildings and character of the conservation area would be maintained (*issue 8 and 9 in representations*).

A new entrance and reception area for the university campus would be provided within the Old Senate Wing. To facilitate this on the eastern elevation facing towards King Street, stonework would be removed and combined with existing window opening to form a new 4.9m wide entrance to the building. To signify its location and provide a formal approach, an entrance podium formed in silver/grey etched precast concrete and a freestanding steel canopy would be provided adjacent to

the new opening. The simple lightweight structure would provide an indication of the new entrance whilst having minimal impact on the fabric of the building. The elevation is relatively simple and repetitive, and the provision of the entrance would not see the removal of any significant architectural features. It is considered the character of the building would be maintained (*issue 8 in representations*).

Short-distance views

By virtue of being surrounded by existing buildings, the only place that the new structure would be seen outwith the courtyard and in close proximity, would be from the Elphinstone Lawn looking south east, through the passageway between the Linklater Rooms and Cromwell Tower. At present the bookstack extension is visible and with its removal the view would be replaced with the curtain wall glazing façade of the new building. The new façade would be positioned around 3.90m further back than the bookstack extension currently is, in relation to the walls of the Cromwell Tower and Linklater Rooms. This would allow a small external courtyard to be retained at the western entrance to the learning hall. Due to its largely concealed nature and setback behind Cromwell Tower and Linklater Rooms, the structure would appear as a subsidiary element, retaining the primacy of the more prominent and important buildings (*issue 10 in representations*).

Having reviewed the proposals, Historic Environment Scotland shares the opinion of the Planning Service, and considers that the structure would be sufficiently recessed within the courtyard and would not significantly detract from the setting of the nearby A-listed chapel.

A smaller courtyard would be formed at the end of the pend between the Old Senate Wing and Elphinstone Hall, where a secondary eastern entrance would be formed. Again, the structure would be setback so that it would not be seen outwith the pend.

Medium to Long-distance views

Due to the eaves, roof plane and ridgeline heights of Elphinstone Hall, the Old Senate Wing and the King's College Conference Centre, the learning hall and plant room would sit below the ridge level of these buildings. It would therefore not be possible to see the new structure from either the north, south or east of the King's College group of buildings in terms of medium to long distance views. This would preserve the important view across the King's Playing Fields from King Street.

With the learning hall having a corner ridge height of 22.90m (all measurements are above ordnance datum), the only direction which the learning hall and plant room could potentially be seen is from the west, at locations at College Bounds, High Street, Elphinstone Lawn and New Kings.

Acknowledging that the views of King's College from these locations contribute significantly to the appreciation of King's College and the character of Old Aberdeen, the Planning Service had initial concerns with the height of the new structure and its potential to be visible above the ridge of the Linklater Rooms which sits at a height of 22.39m.

In response, the applicant amended the proposal so that the learning hall roof was reduced by 0.55m, from its initial height of 23.45m to 22.90m. This would result in the learning hall being only 0.51m higher than the Linklater Rooms ridgeline. The east plant room, which would sit behind the learning hall when viewed from the west, with its roof sitting at 23.90m, would be 1.00m higher. The resultant potential visual impact is demonstrated through a series of visuals provided by the applicant contained within "*Design and Access Statement Appendix 4A (Additional Visualisations)*". The visuals show how the new structure would sit in relation to the Linklater Rooms from three key areas: Meston Walk, College Bounds/High Street and the area around Elphinstone Lawn.

- Meston Walk represents the most distant and least sensitive views, with a small section of the King's College building group visible through the gap in the walls on either side of Meston Walk where it meets the High Street. The visuals show that from a point around 160m along Meston Walk and then westwards, the very edge of the roof of the learning hall would be visible from a distance, with part of the east plant room sitting behind. Although they would sit above the ridge of the Linklater Rooms, they would sit below the higher ridge of the Old Senate Wing to the east which is located behind at a height of 24.95m.

However, the view of King's College from this direction and distance does not represent a significant view, being some 160m+ away, viewed through a narrow street and the canopies of trees, which even in winter interrupt the direct view to a notable degree. The further west towards Bedford Road the view is taken from, the less prominent the King's College buildings become, until they are barely noticeable in the streetscape. The proposed structures would be no higher than the Old Senate Wing which would provide a background to them and being coloured grey to match the slate of the existing roofs, what little that may be seen, would not be particularly noticeable or obtrusive.

- Moving east along Meston Walk, close to the junction with College Bounds/High Street (around 110m from the proposal) the view would become more open with more of King's College visible. However due to the closer proximity, screening provided by the Linklater Rooms and the setback position of the learning hall and plant room behind the Linklater Rooms, they would no longer be visible. Therefore, the view from this position and the important views from College Bounds, High Street and Elphinstone Lawn, which characterise King's College and which are closer again, would be preserved.
- Moving northwards towards New King's which forms the northern edge of the Elphinstone Lawn, the Linklater Rooms and application site would be viewed at an oblique angle, very slightly elevated above the High Street and lawn. The new learning hall and plant room however would remain screened by the Linklater Rooms, and to a lesser extent Elphinstone Hall. From this direction, and from the adjacent point on the High Street, a gap between the roof slope at the gable-end of the Linklater Rooms and the wall of the Cromwell Tower is visible, which currently allows views of mechanical plant on the roof of the bookstack. The new south plant room and structure of the circulatory space would be seen through this gap and to small extent would screen some of the plant which would remain. Given the already compromised view, it is not considered that the ability to see any of the new structure through this gap would materially affect the setting of the surrounding listed buildings or character of the conservation area.
- Continuing eastwards, views from the end of Dunbar Street/Regent Walk junction and around the Taylor Building would be at such acute angle and close proximity, that Elphinstone Hall and the Linklater Rooms would screen the structures. There would be no visual change from this direction.

Historic Environment Scotland have reviewed the proposals and conclude that learning hall would be well concealed behind the Linklater Rooms in significant views from the west, including a range of views from Meston Walk so as to ensure the setting and primacy of the A-listed chapel is maintained. HES also consider that the plant room would be sufficiently concealed in views from the west (Meston Walk, High Street, Elphinstone Lawn), due to its greater setback position and proposed grey anodised cladding which would match the colour of the natural slate roofing as closely possible.

It is therefore considered that in medium to long distance views the proposal would maintain the setting of the group of listed buildings and character of the conservation area (*issues 2 and 3 in representations*).

Trees

Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands) indicates that there is a presumption against all activities and development that will result in the loss of, or damage to, trees that contribute to nature conservation, landscape character, local amenity or climate change adaptation and mitigation. Development should be sited to minimise adverse impacts on trees, with measures taken to protect trees and ensure their long-term management. Where trees may be impacted, protection measures and/or compensatory planting must be agreed.

To accommodate the development, the four trees within the courtyard would be removed – an ornamental cherry tree at 8m tall and three dwarf conifers which are between 6 and 7m tall. They are considered to be in fair condition, with life expectancies of 10 to 40 years. They contribute to the character of the courtyard; however, they cannot be seen outwith it and therefore their contribution to the wider character of the campus is limited. The proposal could not proceed without their removal and when balanced against the benefits it would offer and the very localised impact of their loss, their removal is considered acceptable. Compensatory planting would be provided in the garden behind 50-52 College Bounds in the form of ten cherry trees, which would offset the loss to a certain extent.

Initial concerns were raised with the proposed hard landscaping in the garden behind 50-52 College Bounds and its potential impact upon the roots of a very large 20m tall sycamore tree. To address the matter, the area of hard landscaping has been reduced in size so that it would no longer have an impact.

The proposals in relation to trees have been reviewed by Environmental Policy colleagues and are considered acceptable. Tree protection measures are proposed to minimise any damage to trees which are to be retained during construction with appropriate conditions recommended.

Accessibility and Parking

Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development) and Policy T3 (Sustainable and Active Travel) explains that, commensurate with the scale and anticipated impact, new developments must demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to minimise traffic generated and to maximise opportunities for sustainable and active travel. They must be accessible by a range of transport modes, with an emphasis on active and sustainable transport, and the internal layout of developments must prioritise walking, cycling and public transport.

The Old Aberdeen campus is well located within the urban area, readily accessible by walking and public transport and only around mile from the city centre. The campus also sits within a controlled parking zone.

Eighteen car parking spaces would be lost because of the creation of the new entrance at the Old Senate Wing and the enhancement of the public realm adjacent to it, with four accessible spaces retained. The existing spaces are currently used for VIP visitors or staff and available on a permit basis. Eighteen spaces within the Taylor Building car park will be reallocated from general visitor/staff to VIP spaces when required.

Expanded long-stay cycle a parking facility of 34 spaces would be provided within the grounds of 50-52 College Bounds to replace the existing 16 spaces. Short-stay cycle parking would also be

required, and a condition has been attached requiring details to be submitted and agreed for both types.

A drop-off area for visitors would be created beside the new reception entrance within the Old Senate Wing. Otherwise servicing of the King's College buildings would continue to take place from Regent Walk and the areas surrounding the buildings.

The concerns from the Roads Development Management Team with the wider parking and cycling provision at the Old Aberdeen campus are acknowledged. Campus style developments such as the University of Aberdeen or Foresterhill do present issues in terms of management of parking over the long term because they have been developed over many decades and as travel patterns and demands have changed. When dealing with individual planning applications, mitigation such as additional parking, can only be sought for impacts which occur as a direct result of that proposal. In this case, whilst the University has stated that one of the aims is to create the potential for future growth in student numbers by having enhanced facilities which would make the University more attractive, it is difficult to attribute any particular increase to the proposal directly. This is especially the case going forward as blended learning and the ability of staff to work from home is considered which could change travel patterns and parking demand. The nature of the space also makes it difficult to attribute any specific increase in student numbers as the learning hall would be a flexible space which could be used for socialising, events, community engagement and which would function alongside the University's new reception area – in effect a central hub for the existing campus. It should also be noted that much of the new floorspace is circulatory space to allow the existing buildings surrounding the courtyard to be brought back into productive use. As this space in these buildings already exists and is not changing use, it is not possible to consider it in terms of requiring additional parking if that was in fact desired.

Notwithstanding, recognising these concerns the university has committed to engaging with the Roads Development Management Team out-with this application on a refresh of their campus travel plan. This would involve a campus-wide assessment of travel facilities, identifying any shortfalls in parking and cycle parking and any future developments which could influence travel patterns. This would then inform any future applications for development at the campus.

Given the good accessibility of the site, the existing parking control measures on the campus, the existence of a campus travel plan and the low likelihood of any increase in student numbers as a direct result of this development, it is considered the transport aspects of the proposal are acceptable.

Other technical matters

Archaeology

Policy D4 (Historic Environment) highlights the importance of considering archaeology. An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment has been produced by the applicant. It recommends that a watching brief is carried out during excavation of the courtyard. The Council's archaeology advisor considers this approach acceptable and requests that a condition should be attached requiring a programme of archaeological works to be agreed and implemented. It is therefore recommended that such a condition is applied to any approval.

Waste Storage and Collection

Policy R6 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development) requires that all new developments should have sufficient space for the storage of general waste, recyclable materials and compostable wastes where appropriate. An existing area for the storage of waste bins located adjacent to the rear of Elphinstone Hall and adjacent to Regent Walk is proposed to be enclosed so that the bins would be concealed behind a wall which would incorporate a small porter's bothy. This arrangement is considered acceptable.

Drainage

Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality) requires suitable drainage arrangements to be made. A drainage assessment has been submitted which proposes that foul water would be discharged via a connection to the existing Scottish Water combined sewer located on Regent Walk. Similarly, surface water from the roof of the new structure would discharge to the same sewer. With these arrangements being considered appropriate in principle, a condition is proposed requiring detailed drainage proposals to be submitted.

Other matters raised in representations

- The community council raised concern with light pollution because of light emanating from high-level windows and the west entrance of the new structure. Notwithstanding, it is unlikely that light from within the new structure would be so bright as to clash with the lighting of the cloisters on the opposite side of the Linklater Rooms, or give rise to wider light pollution, especially given the urban nature and existing light levels within the area. A condition has been attached requiring details of any external lighting to be submitted and approved.
- Concern is raised that the open plan nature of the learning hall would result in poor acoustics and excessive noise within (*issue 24 in representations*). Whilst the design of a building is a material consideration, the internal acoustics and suitability of the building for the intended use is a matter for an applicant rather than the planning authority, when not impacting on other parties.
- Concern is raised with the loss of privacy that occupants of the buildings surrounding the learning hall may experience, as well as those within the new building (*issue 25 in representations*). As the existing buildings and new buildings would all be owned by the university and be in university use there are no concerns with loss of privacy as no third party would be being affected.
- Concern is raised with the potential for the existing building around the courtyard to suffer loss of daylight (*issue 26 in representations*). As the existing buildings and proposed are in the same ownership this is not considered to be a planning consideration as again no third party's amenity would be affected. Notwithstanding, clear storey glazing formed as part of the new structure would allow light into the learning hall and the windows of existing buildings facing the courtyard.
- The loss of the King's College Chapel's vestry (located within the ground floor of Cromwell Tower) as a facility for the chapel is raised as a concern (*issue 23 in representations*). However, this is an operational matter for the university and is not a material planning consideration.
- Concern is raised that proper neighbour notification has not been carried out by the University. (*issue 29 in representations*). The Council are responsible for notifying neighbouring premises of applications, which has been carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements. Any non-statutory consultations carried out by the university themselves in developing the proposals are their responsibility and are not a material planning consideration.

- The Planning Service is aware of alleged unauthorised installation of gates at the passage between the Linklater Rooms and Cromwell Tower which are said to have taken place at some point after 1999, however this is not considered to be of significance in the assessment of this proposal. The plans note that the gates are proposed to be refurbished and painted, which does not require consent. Their status is being investigated as a separate matter.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

In relation to this particular application, the policies in the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 (PALDP) substantively reiterate those in the adopted Local Development Plan and the proposal is acceptable in terms of both Plans for the reasons previously given.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve conditionally

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposal represents a carefully considered intervention in the historic environment which would enable underused listed buildings to be brought back into use and enable the university to provide modern, flexible and efficient space. The King's College group of buildings have continuously evolved over time and for them to remain relevant and in productive use, appropriately considered change continues to be required. This approach is in accordance with Historic Environment Policy for Scotland.

The demolition of the bookstack extension and James Mackay kitchen extension have been justified in terms of Historic Environment Scotland's policy on the demolition of listed buildings, with it being demonstrated that they do not possess the same special architectural or historic interest as the main buildings within the group listing. Their removal would have a neutral impact on the character of King's College and would allow the remaining, more significant buildings to be repurposed and integrated into the new space. It would also allow concealed elevations which have greater significance to be revealed, enhancing the appreciation of the buildings.

Whilst spaces around buildings can be just as important as the buildings themselves, the courtyard is not a significant space in relation to the historic development of King's College and its contribution towards the setting of the listed building group to which it relates is minimal. It is considered that the space does not contribute to the special interest of the listed building group or the wider conservation area to any great extent and that its loss when balanced against the benefits of the proposals is considered acceptable. The loss of the trees within the courtyard is not considered significant as their loss would have a very localised impact and would enable the proposal replacement planting would be provided at 50–52 College Bounds which is considered acceptable in terms of compensation. Whilst it is appreciated that the removal of the courtyard in terms of its status as memorial will evoke strong emotions, it is not a material planning consideration.

The location of the new structure within the enclosed courtyard, accompanied by careful design and a reduction in height of the learning hall roof, ensures that it would generally be concealed from views from the surrounding area. The elements that would be higher than the surrounding buildings would only be visible from Meston Walk around 160 metres away, where the distance, narrow angle of view and intervening vegetation would result in an insignificant effect on the setting of the King's College group of listed buildings and character of the conservation area. From important views at College Bounds, High Street and New Kings, the building would not be seen above the Linklater Rooms.

It is therefore considered that setting of the listed buildings and character of the conservation area would be preserved, in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy, Historic Environment Policy for Scotland and its associated managing change guidance, relevant legislative requirements and Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design) and Policy D4 (Historic Environment) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP) and the corresponding policies in the Proposed ALDP.

Otherwise, subject to relevant planning conditions, the proposals would meet relevant technical and design criteria relating to archaeology, re-use of granite, drainage and waste as covered by policies Policy D4 (Historic Environment), Policy D5 (Our Granite Heritage), Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality), Policy R6 (Waste Management Requirements for New Development).

CONDITIONS

PRE-DEMOLITION

(1) CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT

No development (including demolition or site setup) shall commence unless a site-specific construction method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The method statement shall include details of (i) where site compounds would be located; (ii) how the construction site and compounds would be accessed; (iii) how the historic environment outwith the site would be safeguarded during construction. Thereafter construction shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved statement.

Reason – to safeguard the historic environment during construction.

(2) ARCHAEOLOGY

No development (including demolition or site setup) shall commence unless an archaeological written scheme of investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority and a programme of archaeological works has been carried out in accordance with the approved WSI. The WSI shall include details of how the recording and recovery of archaeological resources found within the application site shall be undertaken, and how any updates, if required, to the written scheme of investigation will be provided throughout the implementation of the programme of archaeological works. Should the archaeological works reveal the need for post excavation analysis the development hereby approved shall not be brought into use unless a post-excavation research design (PERD) for the analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The PERD shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason – to safeguard and record the archaeological potential of the area.

(3) TREE PROTECTION

No development (including demolition or site setup) shall take place unless the tree protection fencing and ground root protection, shown in Tree Survey Report (April 2021) by Struan Dalgleish Arboriculture and associated drawings, has been implemented. Thereafter the fencing shall remain in place for the duration of construction of the development.

Reason – to protect trees from damage during construction. in accordance with Policy NE5 - Trees and Woodlands.

(4) DEMOLITION METHODOLOGY

No development (including demolition or site setup) shall take place unless a methodology for the demolition of the bookstack extension and James Mackay Hall kitchen extension has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall include measures to protect the retained structures and buildings around the down-takings and details of how the existing structures will be made good once the demolition works have been carried out and include details of the reuse or retention for future use of any granite down-takings. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

(5) STONE CLEANING

No development (including demolition or site setup) shall take place unless details of any proposed stone cleaning have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The ACC Supplementary Guidance on Stone Cleaning and Historic Environment Scotland's Technical Advice Note (TAN 09 – Stone Cleaning of Granite Buildings) must be considered in developing the proposals. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme.

In this condition 'stone cleaning' means the cleaning of stone using abrasive, chemical or high-pressure water (above 50 psi).

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

(6) CREATION OF OPENINGS AND MAKING GOOD OF STONEMWORK

No development (including demolition or site setup) shall take place unless a methodology for the formation of all new openings or other alterations to existing stonework has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall include details of the making good of any stonework exposed by down-takings or affected by the creation of openings. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

(7) DRAINAGE

No development shall take place unless a detailed scheme for the disposal of foul and surface water drainage has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter the development shall not be brought into use unless the development has been implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and is available for use.

Reason – to safeguard water quality and to ensure that the development can be adequately drained.

(8) EXTERNAL PUBLIC REALM AND LANDSCAPING

No development associated with the construction of the development shall take place unless a scheme providing details and material specifications (including samples) for the public realm works proposed on drawing 4542 (PL) 1510 and 4542 (PL) 1687 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter the building shall not be brought into use unless the works have been constructed in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason – to integrate the development into the surrounding area.

(9) WASTE STORE AND PORTERS BOTHY

No development shall take place unless a scheme showing construction details of the porters bothy and waste storage area has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall include details of the proposed new stonework, metal gates, window and door. Thereafter (i) development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme; (ii) no part of the building shall be brought into use unless the waste storage area has been constructed and is available for use; and (iii) the waste storage areas shall thereafter not be used for any other purpose other than the purpose of storing waste generated by the development.

Reason – to ensure (i) an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal and (ii) that there is sufficient space for the storage of waste and to maintain the amenity of the area.

(10) EXTERNAL FINISHING MATERIALS

No development shall take place unless a scheme detailing all external finishing materials of the proposed building has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall include –

1. Detailed specifications of all materials to be used on the external areas of the building (including samples)
2. Elevational drawings clearly showing which materials are to be used on each part of the building
3. 1:20 construction drawings, showing the size of granite cladding blocks to be used
4. 1:20 construction drawings, showing the detailing of points where there would be a change in the surface finishes (for example where glazed sections of frontage meet granite-clad sections)

Thereafter the development shall be finished in accordance with the approved scheme unless a written variation has been approved by the planning authority.

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

(11) EXTERNAL LIGHTING STRATEGY

No development associated with the construction of the development shall take place unless a scheme for any external lighting of the new and existing buildings and its external areas has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter the building shall not be brought into use unless the approved scheme has been implemented and is operational.

Reason – to integrate the development into the surrounding streetscape and skyline.

(12) CROMWELL TOWER

No development shall take place unless a scheme showing (i) how the proposed new staircase and associated structure adjacent to the Cromwell Tower would abut the existing building; (ii) a methodology for all new and altered openings on the elevations of the Cromwell Tower; and (iii) details (including samples) of any reclaimed stone to be used have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

(13) OLD SENATE WING – DOOR

No development shall take place unless details (including 1:10 elevation and section) of the proposed new profiled metal doors proposed at the Old Senate Wing have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

(14) OLD SENATE WING – ENTRANCE

No development shall take place unless detail (including 1:10 elevation and section) and a methodology for the creation of the new opening on the east elevation of the Old Senate Wing; and (ii) details of how the new podium and canopy would abut the existing building, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

(15) BIRD CONTROL MEASURES

No development shall take place unless details of any bird control measures proposed for the exterior of the buildings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details

Reason – to ensure an appropriately high quality of detailing commensurate with the setting of the proposal.

PRE-OCCUPATION

(16) CYCLE PARKING

The development shall not be occupied unless a scheme for cycle parking has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall include details of short stay cycle parking near the entrances to the development and long-stay secure and covered cycle parking (including within the grounds of 50-52 College Bounds).

Thereafter the development shall not be occupied unless the approved scheme has been implanted and is available for use.

Reason – to encourage cycling.

OTHER

(17) SOFT LANDSCAPING

All soft landscaping and tree planting proposals shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme (drawing 4542 (PL) 1687) and shall be completed during the planting season immediately following the commencement of the development or as otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority. Any planting which, within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, in the opinion of the Planning Authority is dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased, shall be replaced by plants of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason – to ensure provision of the replacement planting.