

Development Management Sub Committee

Wednesday 8 September 2021

Application for Conservation Area Consent 20/05646/CON At Centrum House, 108 - 114 And 116 Dundas Street, Edinburgh Complete demolition of existing buildings

Item number

Report number

Wards

B05 - Inverleith

Summary

The demolition of existing buildings will preserve the adjacent listed buildings and their settings including any special architectural or historic interest they possess, with reference to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and in compliance with LDP Policy Env 3. The removal of the existing buildings and redevelopment of the site will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, with reference to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and in accordance with LDP Policy Env 5.

Outcome of previous Committee

This application was previously considered by Committee on 16.06.2021

Links

[Policies and guidance for this application](#)

LDPP, LEN02, LEN05, NSG, NSLBCA, CRPNEW, HES, HESCAC, HESSET,

Report

Application for Conservation Area Consent 20/05646/CON At Centrum House, 108 - 114 And 116 Dundas Street, Edinburgh Complete demolition of existing buildings

Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that this application be Granted subject to the details below.

Background

2.1 Site description

The application relates to a site measuring approximately 0.167 hectares in area located at the north-west corner of Dundas Street and Fettes Row, bounded by Henderson Place to the rear (west).

The existing buildings on site comprises two adjoining office blocks: 108-114 Dundas Street 116 Dundas Street, dating from the 1980s. Both blocks are seven storeys high in total with a combined internal floor area of approximately 4,600sqm and two below ground levels including a car park with 35 spaces at basement level.

Several category B listed buildings are in proximity to the site, the nearest being the adjacent buildings to the south at 13-24 Fettes Row (inclusive numbers) and 104 and 106 Dundas Street (reference: LB28755, listed on 10 November 1966). The other listed buildings are on the opposite corner to the site at 1-12 Fettes Row (inclusive numbers) and 99-103 Dundas Street (reference: LB28754, listed on 15 July 1965), 87-97A Dundas Street (reference: LB28712, listed on 13 September 1964) and 79-85 Dundas Street and 34B Cumberland Street (reference: LB28711, listed on 13 September 1964). All these buildings are category B listed. The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site boundary runs adjacent to the southern edge of the site.

The former Royal Bank of Scotland offices occupy the corner site opposite on the east side of Dundas Street and north side of Fettes Row. A recent residential development at 120 Dundas Street, built around 15 years ago, adjoins the site to the north and there are residential flats to the north-west of the site on Henderson Row.

The site is mainly level, with a gradual rise from north to south up Dundas Street. There are nine street trees located within the hard landscaping of the basement lightwell to the front of the buildings which is enclosed by a plinth with railings. The land to the rear of the site comprises a tarmac car park and the north boundary is marked by a residential block and its communal garden wall.

This application site is located within the New Town Conservation Area.

2.2 Site History

2 October 2020 - Proposal of Application Notice approved for demolition of existing building and erection of mixed-use development including residential, office, retail and café/restaurant uses (application number 20/03923/PAN).

Related Planning History

Former RBS site (on the opposite corner of Dundas Street/Fettes Row)

26 February 2021 - planning permission minded to grant for demolition of existing buildings and erection of mixed-use development comprising residential, hotel, office and other commercial uses, with associated landscaping/public realm, car parking and access arrangements at 34 Fettes Row (application number 20/03034/FUL).

26 February 2021 - conservation area consent granted for complete demolition in a conservation area at 34 Fettes Row (application number 20/03661/CON).

120 Dundas Street (adjacent the application site to the north)

19 January 2009 - planning permission granted to demolish office building and erect mixed used residential (24 units) and commercial development (classes 1, 2 and 4) at 118 Dundas Street (formerly 120 Dundas Street) (application number 06/00946/FUL).

18 July 2006 - conservation area consent granted for demolition of office building at 118 Dundas Street (formerly 120 Dundas Street) (application number 06/00946/CON).

Main report

3.1 Description Of The Proposal

The application is for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site comprises two adjoining office blocks: 108-114 Dundas Street 116 Dundas Street, dating from the 1980s.

An associated application for planning permission has been submitted for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and erection of a mixed-use development comprising 50 flats, including 12 affordable units, with three commercial units in Class 1 (retail), 2 (office) and 3 (café/restaurant) uses at ground and lower ground level, private and communal amenity space, landscaping and basement level car and cycle parking (application number 20/05645/FUL).

Supporting documents

- Heritage Statement
- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement; and
- Tree Survey and Report

These documents are available to view on the Planning and Building Standards Online Service.

3.2 Determining Issues

Section 14 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states - In considering whether to grant consent, special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. For the purposes of this issue, preserve, in relation to the building, means preserve it either in its existing state or subject only to such alterations or extensions as can be carried out without serious detriment to its character.

Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states - special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

In determining applications for conservation area consent, the Development Plan is not a statutory test. However the policies of the Local Development Plan (LDP) inform the assessment of the proposals and are a material consideration.

3.3 Assessment

To address these determining issues, the Committee needs to consider whether:

- a) the demolition will seriously detract from the character and setting of adjacent listed buildings;
- b) the demolition will adversely affect the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- c) the proposal replacement development is acceptable; and

d) comments raised have been addressed.

a) Setting of Listed Buildings

Section 59 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas)(Scotland) Act 1997 states:-

"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, a planning authority or the Secretary of State, as the case may be, 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."

Historic Environment Scotland's document 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment - Setting' states;

"Setting' is the way the surroundings of a historic asset or place contribute to how it is understood, appreciated and experienced."

The document states that where development is proposed it is important to:

- *"identify the historic assets that might be affected;*
- *define the setting of each historic asset; and*
- *assess the impact of any new development on this".*

LDP Policy Env 3 states that development within the curtilage or affecting the setting of a listed building will only be permitted if not detrimental to the appearance or character of the building or its setting.

The listed buildings affected to any significant extent by the proposed demolition in terms of setting comprise those at 13-24 Fettes Row (inclusive numbers) and 104 and 106 Dundas Street, 1-12 Fettes Row and 99-103 Dundas Street, 87-97A Dundas Street and 79-85 Dundas Street and 34B Cumberland Street. All these buildings are category B listed.

The south side of Fettes Row/Royal Crescent represents the northern most expansion of the Second New Town in its completed form. The corner blocks within Dundas Street form a visual 'gateway' into the Second New Town from the north.

The character of the south side of Fettes Row is that of a planned classical style residential development built in blonde Craigleith sandstone, dating from the 1820s, with the key characteristics of a monumental palace block with unifying symmetrical and rhythmic elevational treatment, no projecting elements in the wall planes and shallow roof pitches and slightly advanced terminal pavilions that are a storey higher.

The monumental palace designs of the east-west streets of the Second New Town were not possible to achieve on its steep south-north slopes, so the buildings on these streets are mostly tenement blocks. Whilst there is regularity and symmetry within the blocks, they step down as on Dundas Street as emphasised by the eaves and cornice.

The corner blocks of the east-west streets facing Dundas Street are usually on a level and of the same height (for example, in Great King Street). In order to deal with the Dundas Street slope, some east-west streets did not include terminal pavilion blocks, such as Cumberland and Northumberland Streets and the downwards 'step' continues on the north side of the street.

In contrast, the current and previous buildings on this site have not formed part of any planned development, although a residential development was planned for the area between Fettes Row and Henderson Row, probably by William Burn in the 1820s. Only a small part of this scheme was built and the remainder of the area became occupied by an assortment of light industrial buildings constructed in the later 19th century and replaced by the current offices in the 1980s.

The existing structures on the site are not particularly sensitive to the setting of the nearby listed buildings and their demolition is acceptable on this basis.

With reference to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 the proposals preserve the adjacent listed buildings and their settings including any special architectural or historic interest they possess. The proposals are acceptable and in compliance with LDP Policy Env 3.

b) Character and Appearance of Conservation Area

Section 64(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 which states:

"In exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

Historic Environment Scotland's, Interim Guidance on the Designation of Conservation Areas and Conservation Area Consent (April 2019) outlines criteria to assess the acceptability of the demolition of unlisted buildings within conservation area, including:

- the importance of the building to the character or appearance of any part of the conservation area, and of proposals for the future of the cleared site;
- if the building is considered to be of any value, either in itself or as part of a group, a positive attempt should always be made by the planning authority to achieve its retention, restoration and sympathetic conversion to some other compatible use before proposals to demolish are seriously investigated;
- where demolition may be thought appropriate, for example, if the building is of little townscape value, if its structural condition rules out its retention at reasonable cost, or if its form or location makes its re-use extremely difficult, consent to demolish should be given only where there are acceptable proposals for the new building.

LDP Policy Env 5 (Conservation Areas - Demolition of Buildings) only supports the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the area in exceptional circumstances. If the building does not make a positive contribution, its removal is considered acceptable in principle so long as the replacement. If it does make a positive contribution, then reference is made to taking into account the considerations set out in Policy Env 2 (Listed Buildings - Demolition).

The New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal identifies the key characteristics of the Second New Town as:

- grand formal streets lined by fine terraced buildings expressing neo-classical order, regularity, symmetry, rigid geometry, and a hierarchical arrangement of buildings and spaces with controlled vistas and planned views;
- the generally uniform height ensuring that the skyline is distinct and punctuated only by church spires, steeples and monuments; and
- the important feature of terminated vistas within the grid layouts and the long-distance views across and out of the conservation area.

The existing buildings forming Centrum House form part of a small group of early 1980's structures of corporate character that are at odds with their predominantly residential context. BUPA house and Centrum House were design by Ian Burke Associates. The group includes the former Royal Bank of Scotland Computer Centre by Michael Laird and Partners, dating from 1978 on the opposite side of Dundas Street and Fettes Row, the subject of a recently granted application for conservation area consent to demolish the building (reference 20/03661/CON). "The Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh" by Gifford, McWilliam and Walker, 1985 describes Centrum House and its adjoining office BUPA House as parodies of the RBS Computer Centre.

Some features of the buildings are unsympathetic to their location, particularly in terms of building lines design and landscaping. On Dundas Street, the two buildings are set back approximately 9.5 metres from the building line of the recent flatted block at No. 120. Whilst this line equates to that of the RBS Computer Centre opposite, it does not relate to the historic building line of the late Victorian tenements at 122-160 Dundas Street, nor to the Second New Town tenements at 78-106 Dundas Street.

The existing structures on the site are not without merit in terms of their natural sandstone frontages and inclusion of modern interpretations of traditional features, including basement lightwells, entrance platts and boundary railings. However, they are not particularly sensitive to the character or appearance of the conservation area and should not provide design precedents for any replacement buildings. In particular, the mansard roofs are out of character with the shallow-pitch roofs of the listed Georgian buildings and later tenements.

The loss of the buildings will not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and their demolition is acceptable.

As the buildings are of limited importance to the character and appearance of a conservation area, a condition survey or the marketability of alternative uses is not required be demonstrated. Also, the determining issues for assessing applications for conservation area consent do not include sustainability.

With reference to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 the proposals preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, in compliance with LDP Policy Env 5.

c) Replacement Development

The HES interim guidance and the similar advice in LDP Policy Env 5 (Conservation Areas - Demolition) sets out that consent should generally only be given where there are acceptable proposals for the new building.

As detailed under planning application 20/05645/FUL, the proposals would enable the development of the site in a coherent and positive way.

A condition is recommended to ensure that the buildings are not demolished before a detailed scheme has been granted and the Notification of Initiation of Development has been received with a start date for the detailed development.

d) Public Comments

Material Representations - Objection

New Town and Broughton Community Council

- the case for the demolition of the buildings on the site has not been fully explored or the necessary reasoning behind the proposal for complete demolition being included in the accompanying documents, including what steps have been taken to explore options for re-purposing the existing buildings and why retention of part (or all) of them is not possible; and
- repurposing the existing building would also retain the majority of the existing trees along the western edge of Dundas Street which would provide a more consistent, relevant and subservient streetscape leading to the entrance of the World Heritage site at Fettes Row/Dundas Street junction.

Other Material Objections

- the existing buildings on the site represent a specific time and style and should be retained
- the existing buildings make a position contribution to the character of the area
- loss of trees

These points have been assessed in sections 3.3 a and b).

The following grounds of objection are relevant only to the associated application for planning permission (reference 20/05645/FUL):

- more sustainable to retain existing buildings
- loss of employment space
- proposed uses
- impact on local amenities/services
- banal/monolithic architecture
- proposed building out of keeping with surrounding area
- negative impact on daylighting and overshadowing
- increased noise and disturbance

- loss of privacy and outlook
- pressure on existing waste/recycling facilities
- increased traffic congestion and detrimental to road safety
- added pressure on existing on-street parking difficulties

Non-Material Representations

- noise and disruption during construction works
- potential damage to property as a result of construction works
- lack of response from applicant during PAC process

Conclusion

The demolition of existing buildings will preserve the adjacent listed buildings and their settings including any special architectural or historic interest they possess, with reference to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and in compliance with LDP Policy Env 3. The removal of the existing buildings and redevelopment of the site will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, with reference to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and in accordance with LDP Policy Env 5,

Addendum to Assessment

It is recommended that this application be Granted subject to the details below.

3.4 Conditions/reasons/informatives

Conditions:-

1. No demolition shall start until the applicant has confirmed in writing the start date for the new development by the submission of a Notice of Initiation of Development for planning permission application reference 20/05645/FUL.

Reasons:-

1. In order to safeguard the character of the conservation area.

Informatives

It should be noted that:

1. The works hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.
2. As this application involves the demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area, if consent is granted there is a separate requirement through section 7 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)(Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) to allow us the opportunity to carry out recording of the building. To avoid any unnecessary delay in the case of consent being granted, applicants

are strongly encouraged to complete and return the Consent Application Referral Form found at www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/what-we-do/survey-and-recording/threatened-buildings-survey-programme.

Financial impact

4.1 The financial impact has been assessed as follows:

There are no financial implications to the Council.

Risk, Policy, compliance and governance impact

5.1 Provided planning applications are determined in accordance with statutory legislation, the level of risk is low.

Equalities impact

6.1 The equalities impact has been assessed as follows:

The application has been assessed and has no impact in terms of equalities or human rights.

Sustainability impact

7.1 The sustainability impact has been assessed as follows:

This application is not subject to the sustainability requirements of the Edinburgh Design Guidance.

Consultation and engagement

8.1 Pre-Application Process

Pre-application discussions took place on this application.

8.2 Publicity summary of representations and Community Council comments

The application was originally advertised on 18 September 2020 . A total of 16 representations were received, all objecting to the proposals.

A full assessment of the representations can be found in the main report in the Assessment Section.

Background reading/external references

- To view details of the application go to
- [Planning and Building Standards online services](#)
- [Planning guidelines](#)
- [Conservation Area Character Appraisals](#)
- [Edinburgh Local Development Plan](#)
- [Scottish Planning Policy](#)

Statutory Development Plan Provision

The site is within an urban area and Local Centre as defined in the Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP).

Date registered

16 December 2020

Drawing numbers/Scheme

01,02A,03,04,05B,06A,07A,08B-
12B,13A,14B,15B,16A,17-19,20A,,
21A,22B,23,

Scheme 2

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Links - Policies

Relevant Policies:

Relevant policies of the Local Development Plan.

LDP Policy Env 2 (Listed Buildings - Demolition) identifies the circumstances in which the demolition of listed buildings will be permitted.

LDP Policy Env 5 (Conservation Areas - Demolition of Buildings) sets out criteria for assessing proposals involving the demolition of buildings within a conservation area.

Relevant Non-Statutory Guidelines

Non-statutory guidelines 'LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS' provides guidance on repairing, altering or extending listed buildings and unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

The New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal states that the area is typified by the formal plan layout, spacious stone built terraces, broad streets and an overall classical elegance. The buildings are of a generally consistent three storey and basement scale, with some four storey corner and central pavilions.

Relevant Government Guidance on Historic Environment.

HES Interim Guidance on Conservation Area Consent sets out Government guidance on the principles that apply to the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas

Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting sets out Government guidance on the principles that apply to developments affecting the setting of historic assets or places.

Appendix 1

Application for Conservation Area Consent 20/05646/CON At Centrum House, 108 - 114 And 116 Dundas Street, Edinburgh Complete demolition of existing buildings

Consultations

Historic Environment Scotland

Centrum House, 108 to 114 Dundas Street, consists of two separate office buildings (originally BUPA House and Sutherland House) constructed during the 1980s. The unlisted buildings are situated within the New Town Conservation Area, with the boundary of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site immediately adjacent to the south, running along the middle of Fettes Row.

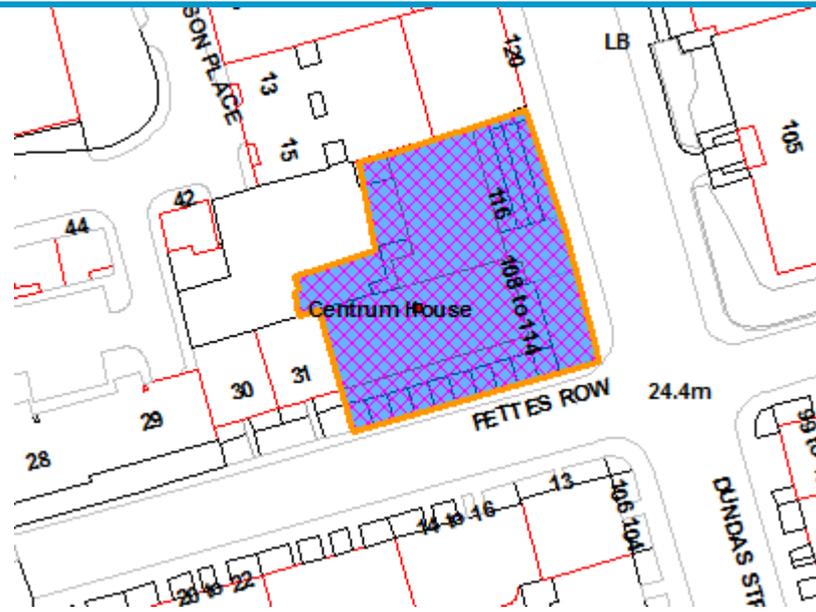
We consider that the existing buildings make a very limited contribution to the New Town Conservation Area and therefore we have no concerns with their redevelopment. We will assess the impact of the new building on the World Heritage site and adjacent A listed buildings under the separate consultation for planning permission.

Planning authorities are expected to treat our comments as a material consideration, and this advice should be taken into account in your decision making. Our view is that the proposals do not raise historic environment issues of national significance and therefore we do not object. However, our decision not to object should not be taken as our support for the proposals. This application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy on listed building/conservation area consent, together with related policy guidance.

Archaeology

Although occurring with Edinburgh's New Town and within an area associated with medieval industry and farming, the construction of the 1980's office blocks making up Centrum House has almost certainly removed any significant archaeology across the site. Therefore, it has been concluded that in this instance there are no known, significant, archaeological implications regarding these linked applications.

Location Plan



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