

# Development Management Sub-Committee Report

**Report returning to Committee - Wednesday 8 February 2023**

**Application for Planning Permission  
14 - 17 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh, EH3 8HA.**

**Proposal: Change of Use from office to form 34x residential units  
with associated works (as amended).**

**Item – Committee Decision  
Application Number – 21/03992/FUL  
Ward – B11 - City Centre**

## **Report Returning to Committee**

This application was continued at the Development Management Sub-Committee on 7 December 2022 for further information. The Committee wanted further details of the following:

- The potential inclusion of a lift and a stair within 15 Atholl Crescent.
- The potential for onsite affordable housing to be provided within the mews building to the rear of the site.

The applicant has also made changes to the proposed cycle parking following comments made by members during this meeting.

## **Recommendations**

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

## **SECTION A – Assessment**

### Accessibility

At the 7 December 2022 meeting of the Development Management Sub-Committee, members raised concerns regarding the removal of the existing lift within 15 Atholl Crescent in terms of providing accessibility for future residents, with specific reference to LDP Policy Hou 2.

LDP Policy Hou 2 states that the Council will seek the provision of a mix of house types and sizes where practical, to meet a range of housing needs, including those of families, older people and people with special needs, and having regard to the character of the surrounding area and its accessibility.

The applicant has given consideration to the retention of the existing lift at 15 Atholl Crescent in its current position. This option has been discounted as it would require the formation of a new stair across all floors to the rear of the building. This would result in a loss of historic fabric and the loss of a number of rooms across proposed flats within this part of the scheme. This would require a full redesign of the proposals for 15 Atholl Crescent and would inevitably change the mix and size of flats proposed. This would result in the need for a new planning application.

The applicant also notes that the removal of the lift within 15 Atholl Crescent is supported by HES as the reinstatement of a stair in the entrance hall represents a significant conservation gain for the listed building. For the same reasons the retention of the proposed staircase and the installation of a new lift within 15 Atholl Crescent has also been discounted.

Following comments from the Committee, the applicant has provided additional supporting information relating to the current accessibility of the existing office building. This highlights that despite a lift being located at 15 Atholl Crescent and the horizontal connections between the four townhouses, sections of all townhouses are not accessible for wheelchair users. There are numerous level changes across all buildings which limit accessibility. There is also no lift located within the existing mews building and no level access to upper levels of that building within the current layout. The baseline accessibility of the site is therefore relatively low, though fairly typical of such townhouse layouts.

In considering the accessibility of the proposed 34 residential unit development, the applicant notes the following:

- All 34 units have been designed in line with Building Standards to allow for future adaptation for unassisted living;
- level access is provided at 9 of 34 units (26 %). This includes two basement level flats within the Atholl Crescent townhouses.
- A further four units (12 %) have been designed to allow future installation of stairlifts. This includes two units within the mews building and two units within the Atholl Crescent townhouses.
- Four of the units can be accessed via a limited number of steps (ranging from 3-5 steps) and are therefore appropriate for ambulant disabled users.

With reference to the figures outlined above, 50% of the proposed units are either fully accessible or can be adapted for users with disabilities. As noted at the previous committee meeting in December, a balanced range of unit sizes is proposed. Ground floor units will have access to private gardens and are suitable for growing families, 65% of the units are dual aspect and 47% of units exceed 91 square metres and would therefore meet a range of housing needs.

The mix of residential units proposed is suitable to meet the needs of a range of users and complies with LDP Policy Hou 2 (Housing Mix).

## Affordable Housing

The Committee queried whether there is potential to provide affordable housing on site within the mews building to the rear of the existing townhouses.

The Council's Affordable Housing Team has confirmed that the provision of onsite affordable housing would not be possible within the mews building. For the provision of onsite affordable housing, Registered Social Landlords (RSL) require all units within a stair core to be within their ownership. The stair within the mews building will serve nine flats. To meet the 25 percent affordable housing requirement in this case, eight affordable units would be required on site. This would leave one unit within the stair not under the control of any RSL involved and would not meet their requirements.

The applicant has engaged in an open book exercise as part of the assessment of the application. This outlines an average development cost of £284,000 per unit. The costs outlined by the applicant have been considered by the Council's Affordable Housing Team and have also been assessed and verified by an independent Quantity Surveyor and the Valuation Office Agency. Based on this information, Affordable Housing has advised that the development cost per unit (including within the mews) would be £90,000 out of the budget of an RSL.

The applicant has agreed to the payment of a commuted sum totalling £717,502, to be secured through a Section 75 Legal Agreement. This sum has been calculated by the District Valuer and is accepted by the Council's Affordable Housing Team. With a strong programme of affordable housing being delivered across Edinburgh, it is anticipated this sum can be used to support affordable housing delivery in the same or an adjacent ward.

Subject to the conclusion of an appropriate Section 75 Agreement, the proposed development complies with LDP Policy Hou 6 (Affordable Housing) and the associated Affordable Housing Guidance.

## Cycle Parking

Following concerns raised by the Committee regarding the overall mix of cycle parking provided, the applicant has amended the scheme. The scheme presented to Committee proposed six car parking spaces and 78 cycles spaces, provided by two tier racks, within an internal store.

In the revised scheme, one car parking space has been removed and the space given over to Sheffield stands. Sheffield stands are also now included within the internal store along with electric charge points for bikes. In total, 20 spaces are to be provided by standard Sheffield stands (25%), 8 spaces from non-standard Sheffield stands (10%) and 52 spaces (65%) from two tier racks. The internal store will also include a bike maintenance stand. Given that the proposal is for the conversion of A listed townhouses, within a constrained site, this mix of cycle parking is considered appropriate.

A minor infringement of guidance is acceptable in this instance.

## Emerging Policy Context

The Revised Draft National Planning Framework 4 was approved by the Scottish Parliament on 11 January 2023 to proceed to adoption. On adoption the Revised Draft NPF 4 (2022) will form part of the Council's Development Plan, but at present it remains a material consideration. As adoption of the Revised Draft NPF 4 (2022) is understood to be imminent, and it is now the settled position of Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament, it requires to be given significant weight. Revised Draft NPF 4 (2022) lists various policy provisions under the themes of Sustainable Places, Liveable Places and Productive Places.

Policy 1 of the Draft NPF 4 gives significant weight to the global climate and nature crisis to ensure that it is recognised as a priority in all plans and decisions.

In conclusion, the proposed development is considered to broadly comply with the provisions of NPF 4 and there is not considered to be any significant issues of conflict.

## Recommendation and Reason for Decision

It is recommended that this application is granted subject to the conclusion of an appropriate Section 75 agreement in relation to affordable housing and education contributions.

The proposals comply with Sections 59 and 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

The proposal broadly complies with relevant policies set out in the Local Development Plan (LDP). The proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the character, appearance or special historic interest of the listed buildings or the conservation area. The level of private greenspace provided represents an infringement of LDP Policy Hou 3 (Private Green Space in Housing Development). An infringement is acceptable in this case given the limited space in this established city centre area and the presence of good quality public greenspace in close proximity. The level of cycle parking provided exceeds the minimum requirements of the Parking Standard. The use of two tier racks exceeds the level recommended in guidance. This is acceptable in this case given the proposal is a conversion and there is limited space within this location. A satisfactory residential environment can be achieved in this area, in line with the level of amenity experienced by neighbours.

Overall, the proposals are acceptable and there are no material considerations which outweigh the conclusion above.

A copy of the original Committee report can be found in the list of documents on the [Planning and Building Standards Portal](#)

Or [Council Papers online](#)

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