

Development Management Sub-Committee Report

Wednesday 7 December 2022

**Application for Listed Building Consent
14 - 17 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh, EH3 8HA.**

Proposal: Internal and external alterations to facilitate change of use from office to residential (as amended).

**Item – Committee Decision
Application Number – 21/03991/LBC
Ward – B11 - City Centre**

Reasons for Referral to Committee

This application is linked to planning application 22/00147/FUL which requires to be considered by Development Management Sub Committee because there are developer contributions with financial contributions over £250,000. In the public interest and to enable a holistic approach to considering the proposed development, this Listed Building Consent application will also be considered by Development Management Sub Committee.

Recommendation

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

Summary

The proposals are acceptable in terms of Sections 59 and 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 The proposals comply with the development plan and there are no material considerations which outweigh this conclusion.

SECTION A – Application Background

Site Description

The application site is a series of four conjoined former townhouses which are currently vacant having previously been in use as offices. The buildings are category A listed built in 1825 by Thomas Bonnar (designated 14 December 1970, reference: LB28260). They are 3 storeys with attic and basement built in typical Georgian symmetrical style. The four townhouses were latterly interconnected and used as offices, with a link to the modern mews building to the rear also created at 15 Atholl Crescent. A courtyard area is located between the Townhouses and the existing mews, this serves as a car park with access taken from Atholl Crescent Lane. The site is neighboured by an office at 18 Atholl Crescent and a residential dwelling at 13 Atholl Crescent. Atholl Crescent and Atholl Crescent Lane to the rear are characterised by a mix of residential and uses.

The application site is located within the New Town Conservation Area and the World Heritage Site.

Description of the Proposal

The application is for the conversion of the existing offices into 34 residential units and includes the removal of the rear link to the existing mews building. The proposal includes 23 flats within the existing townhouses and 11 units within the mews building. The units consist of a mix of 10 three/four bedroom, 12 two bedroom, 11 one bedroom and 1 studio apartment.

A general overview of the main proposed works is outlined below:

- Removal of double lift core and reinstatement of original stair between ground and third floor in 15 Atholl Crescent. This will include a Cupola/rooflight reinstated above staircase.
- Reinstatement of original party walls to remove connections between townhouses formed as part of historic alterations.
- Reinstatement of original townhouse entrance to 16 Atholl Crescent with non-original railings blocking external steps removed and original railing positions reinstated.
- Original entrance lobby at 16 Atholl Crescent created internally.
- Link bridge structure connecting townhouses to mews removed with rear facades of both buildings made good. Replacement stone and repairs will be carried out.
- Full renovation of non original sash and case windows with repair of original Georgian windows.
- Renovation of basement level, second and third floor levels including subdivision of spaces. Limited alterations also proposed at ground and first floor levels.
- Removal of non-original partitions and historic alterations. Where possible damaged historic features will be reinstated.

The proposal includes a courtyard area between the townhouses and mews with an approximate area of 620 square metres. This includes six private gardens and six car parking spaces with EV charge points. A secure bike store is provided within the mews building providing space for 78 bikes. Access to the mews and parking area will be taken from Atholl Crescent Lane.

Access to the rear facing basement level apartments within the existing Townhouses can also be taken From Atholl Crescent Lane. Access to the 23 units within the existing Townhouses can also be taken from Atholl Crescent. A bin store is proposed within the mews building to the rear.

Revised Scheme

- The scheme has been revised to refine the approach taken to the refurbishment and upgrade of windows. The original scheme included the full replacement of all windows. In the revised scheme the majority of windows are retained and repaired.
- Amendments to fenestration at the rear of the existing townhouses.
- Stripping back of roof materials to upgrade insulation. Existing slate retained, with selective use of Spanish Heavy Cupa 3 as required. No change to roof profile proposed.
- Original internal doors retained and pinned.
- Layout of rear room in 14 Atholl Crescent amended and suspended ceiling introduced.
- Suspended ceiling introduced to rear room of 16 Atholl Crescent.
- Timber fascias of dormer windows stripped back and replaced with zinc.
- One car parking space removed.
- One parking space designated for disabled users.
- Basement level doors replaced at principal elevation.
- Rooflight formed at 15 Atholl Crescent.

Supporting Information

- Design and Access Statement
- Heritage Statement
- Planning Statement
- Window Survey
- Window Condition Report and Photos

Relevant Site History

96/12636/LBC

14-16 Atholl Crescent

Edinburgh

EH3 8HA

Form new openings at ground & third floor between 13 & 14

Granted

13 February 1997

98/01163/LBC

14-16 Atholl Crescent

Edinburgh

EH3 8HA

Install independent air conditioning units

Granted

27 July 1998

01/03134/LBC
14-16 Atholl Crescent
Edinburgh
EH3 8HA
Alterations to entrance vestibule doors
Refused
6 December 2001

21/03992/FUL
14 - 17 Atholl Crescent
Edinburgh
EH3 8HA
Change of Use from office to form 34x residential units with associated works (as amended).

Other Relevant Site History

No other relevant site history.

Pre-Application process

Pre-application discussions took place on this application.

Consultation Engagement

Historic Environment Scotland

Historic Environment Scotland

Refer to Appendix 1 for a summary of the consultation response.

Publicity and Public Engagement

Date of Neighbour Notification: Not Applicable

Date of Renotification of Neighbour Notification: Not Applicable

Press Publication Date(s): 23 September 2022; 13 August 2021;

Site Notices Date(s): 20 September 2022; 10 August 2021;

Number of Contributors: 1

Section B - Assessment

Determining Issues

Due to the proposals relating to a listed building(s) within a conservation area, this application for listed building consent requires to be assessed against Sections 14 and 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (the "1997 Heritage Act"):

- Having due regard to HES Policy and guidance, do the proposals:
 - a. harm a listed building or its setting? or
 - b. conflict with the objective of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- If the proposals do comply with HES Policy and guidance, are there any compelling reasons (including but not limited to the public sector equality duty) for not approving them?
- If the proposals do not comply with HES Policy and guidance, are there any compelling reasons (including but not limited to the public sector equality duty) for approving them?

Assessment

To address these determining issues, it needs to be considered whether:

a) The proposals harm the listed building and its setting?

The following HES guidance is relevant in the determination of this application:

- Managing Change in the Historic Environmental: Doorways
- Managing Change in the Historic Environmental: Interiors
- Managing Change in the Historic Environmental: Roofs
- Managing Change in the Historic Environmental: Setting
- Managing Change in the Historic Environmental: Windows

Consultation with Historic Environment Scotland has identified a number of elements of the proposed scheme which will have a positive impact on the character of the listed buildings including the reintroduction of a main door to 16 Atholl Crescent, the reintroduction of a main stair to 15 Atholl Crescent and the removal of the rear link to the mews building. The reinstatement of individual houses, removing linkages between the buildings and the removal of security bars to basement level windows will also positively contribute to the character and appearance of the listed buildings.

The application also proposes the reconfiguration of the number of internal spaces to allow the conversion of the spaces for residential use. Historic Environment Scotland's guidance document entitled Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Interiors states that whilst it is advisable to avoid the amalgamation of rooms, and an 'open-plan' layout, within a historic building, with an important cellular plan form, there may be scope to make significant interventions within areas of secondary importance.

The guidance also emphasises the contribution that original decorative feature such as panelling, and cornices make to the character of listed building. It outlines a strong presumption for the retention of original staircases and doors.

In this case the most significant areas of change are limited to the basement level, second and third floors and the modern mews located to the rear. In terms of the hierarchy of Georgian Townhouses these are typically the areas of secondary importance. The basement level was typically used by staff associated with the house and is typically plain in nature. Principal rooms within a townhouse are typically located at ground and first floor level, to the front of the property. Decorative schemes in these parts of the house are typically more elaborate. The placement of doors within rooms is important. Hallways at ground floor level were also typically highly decorative. Upper levels of Georgian Townhouses are typically plain in nature. The second floor would have historically provided guest accommodation and children's bedrooms whilst the upper floor was typically used for staff accommodation.

In this case the basement level, second floor level and third floor level of all the townhouses has undergone significant alteration associated with the conversion of the buildings to form offices in the 1980s. No decorative features remain, and a number of spaces have been unsympathetically subdivided and altered. HES has expressed no concern relating to the proposed alterations of these spaces. Given that these spaces would be expected to have little in the way of decorative features and given the significant level of previous alteration that has already occurred, the proposed changes in this case will not impact the character of the listed buildings. The same is true of proposed internal changes to the mews building. The mews is a modern construction and has been significantly altered to support the previous office use. Changes to the interior of the mews will not impact the character of listing.

At ground floor level the entrance halls at 14 Atholl Crescent and 17 Atholl Crescent remain intact with highly decorative plasterwork and views of the original timber staircase. The entrance hall to 16 Atholl Crescent has been compromised by the removal of the original entrance door and the formation of an office to the front of the property. The original timber staircase is retained in this property. The entrance to 15 Atholl Crescent has been compromised by the removal of the original staircase and the formation of lifts. The proposal scheme will see the reintroduction of a door and entrance hall to 16 Atholl Crescent and the reintroduction of a staircase at 15 Atholl Crescent. This will have a significant positive impact on the character of these buildings. The hallways to 14 and 17 Atholl Crescent and all original decorative features are retained. The original scheme proposed the removal of a number of internal doors and infilling of the entrances. The scheme has been amended to ensure that original doors and entrances from the hallway are retained and pinned to ensure the intention of these spaces remains legible. HES is supportive of this amendment. Basement stairs which were shown as completely removed are now retained and covered over in line with recommendations set out by HES.

Limited subdivision of the ground floor rear rooms at 14, 15 and 16 Atholl Crescent is proposed to allow the formation of new bathrooms. At 16 and 15 Atholl Crescent these rooms have already been subject to significant alteration and the proposed subdivision will not impact the character of the buildings. The rear room of 14 Atholl Crescent has also previously been altered and extended.

However, HES has noted that the early twentieth century decorative scheme, including cornice and timber panels contribute and an arched recess to the north wall do contribute to the character of the building. In response the scheme has been amended, a suspended ceiling is proposed to allow limited subdivision whilst retaining the cornice. Given the level alteration to this room through the twentieth century and that the cornice is not original, subdivision of this space is acceptable. The introduction of a limited suspended ceiling allows the retention of the cornice, limiting the loss of historic material. The proposed layout of this space has also been amended to retain the existing buffet recess. Given that the decorative features are retained and that this room has already been altered, the proposed change is acceptable.

The first floors, as the principal drawing room level and with the greatest number of intact rooms and surviving decorative schemes, undoubtedly forms the most significant space within each of the townhouses. Subdivision and alteration at this level is therefore limited. Three quarter height bathroom pods are proposed within 14 Atholl Crescent and 17 Atholl Crescent. Subdivision of the rear room at 15 Atholl Crescent is proposed, however this space has been subject to earlier alterations and subdivision will not harm the character of the building in this case. HES has raised some concern about the proposed subdivision of the rear rooms in 16 Atholl Crescent, due to the remaining cornice and the seemingly intact floor plan. However, a review of plans from the 80s and from the early 1900s it is clear that the existing rooms are not original in form. The rear rooms have had spine walls removed and relocated and the rooms have also been subject to previous subdivision. The cornice is unlikely to be original. Given the extensive level of intervention in this space, subdivision is acceptable. The revised scheme introduces a suspended ceiling to allow the retention of the existing cornice, limiting the loss of historic material.

Revised interior plans show the retention of original doors, particularly at ground and first floor level, original cornices are retained as are original staircases. The proposed scheme will not have a negative impact on the character of the interiors of the listed buildings. A limited number of fireplaces are present in the buildings. There is a presumption in favour of retaining original fireplaces. However, none of the remaining fireplaces appear original in this case.

Guidance outlined in *Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Doorways* notes the important role doorways, and their associated features, such as entrance steps and platts, can make to the character and physical integrity of some historic buildings. In this case all original doorways on the townhouses are retained. No changes are proposed to the external stairs located on Atholl Crescent which make an important contribution to the character of the listed buildings and the Conservation Area. New modern aluminium doors are proposed on the street facing elevation of the mews building looking onto Atholl Crescent Lane. Existing doors and windows associated with this building are not original and do not contribute to the character of the listed building. Although modern in appearance the new doors proposed are still in keeping with the appearance of Lane and will not detract from the character of the building which is already modern in appearance.

Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Windows outlines a string presumption in favour of the retention of original historic windows, with replacement typically only supported where windows are beyond repair. Glass type, glazing patterns, method of opening and materials are all important considerations in assessing changes to windows.

The introduction of double glazing can be acceptable, though it is expected that original frames are retained, and narrow profile glazing is used with a cavity not exceeding 6 mm. New windows openings and the conversion of windows to doors can be acceptable on secondary elevations and where there is not a strong glazing pattern.

The proposals are supported by a window survey and condition report. Retrofitting of double glazing is proposed for all windows. Only two windows are deemed beyond repair with complete replacement proposed. HES has noted the contribution that the original Georgian windows make to the character of the townhouses, particularly at lower levels. HES recommends that further consideration should be given to the overhaul and upgrading of the original Georgian sashes in repairable condition. Where these are beyond repair, a case for replacement could be made. A condition is included requiring further information is submitted to the Planning Authority for further consideration and approval before any Georgian sashes are replaced has been recommended as part of the accompanying planning application. The proposal also includes the replacement of the timber fascia's and cladding of the dormer windows of the townhouses with zinc. The windows are in poor condition and not original. Zinc is an acceptable material in historic settings and can be coloured to match the existing windows. The proposed alteration will not affect the character of the buildings.

To the rear of the townhouses, one window is to be infilled and new windows are to be formed where the glazed link is removed. The proposal also includes the introduction of external cast iron fall barriers on upper level windows and the conversion of three lower level windows to doors. The rear elevation is a secondary elevation and will not be visible from public viewpoints. The removal of the existing link bridge will improve the appearance of this elevation. The cast iron fall barriers are a sympathetic addition to the elevation. HES has not objected to this addition. The proposal also includes the replacement of all windows of the mews building to the rear. None of the existing windows are historic. The modern windows do not contribute to the character of the listed buildings or their setting.

Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Roofs notes that the significance of a historic roof is derived from a number of factors including its age, functional performance, shape and pitch, profile, and the qualities of its supporting structure, covering materials and associated features. The proposals in this case include removing all roof coverings to decking and rafters to allow new insulation to be installed. The roof profile will be unchanged, and the existing slates are to be reused where possible. If slate is found to be damaged, Scot Slate will be prioritised on visible elevations with the use of Spanish Cupa 3 slate where required. Spanish slate is an acceptable substitute for Scots slate.

Conclusion in relation to the listed building

The proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the character or special historic interest of the listed buildings. A number of elements of the scheme, including the reintroduction of an entrance door and the removal of the rear link bridge will have a positive impact on the character of the buildings. The proposal includes extensive subdivision to achieve the desired layout to support the conversion. These subdivisions are largely limited to areas of secondary importance with no original decorative features. The scheme has been amended to retain decorative features in line with comments from HES.

The subdivision of the rear room on the ground floor of 14 Atholl Crescent and the rear room on the first floor of 16 Atholl Crescent is acceptable given the previous level of intervention in these spaces.

The proposal is acceptable in terms of Section 59 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

b) The proposals harm the character or appearance of the conservation area?

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.

The New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal notes the 'Georgian elegance' of Coates and Atholl Crescent, noting that Atholl crescent has remained largely unchanged. The group of buildings borders the principal approach to the city from the west and forms a grand prelude to the streets of James Craigs New Town.

The formal Georgian setting of the townhouses makes the most significant contribution to the New Town Conservation Area. Atholl Crescent remains largely as planned. The removal of original doorway at 16 Atholl Crescent has had a negative impact on the setting of the street and the Conservation Area. Security bars at the basement level also detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Although the rear of the buildings is screened from view and makes a limited contribution to the appearance of the Conservation Area, the link bridge between 15 Atholl Crescent and the mews does erode the character of the Conservation Area.

The proposal includes limit external changes. The removal of security bars at basement level, the reintroduction of a door to 16 Atholl Crescent and the removal of the link bridge to the rear will contribute positively to character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The return of the buildings to residential use will be compatible with the original character of the conservation area.

A limited number of original Georgian windows remain, and it is expected that those which can be repaired are retained. The window report provided indicates that any repairs will follow the original pattern. The proposed retrofit of windows with double glazing will have no visual impact. Proposed alterations to the fenestration to the rear elevation of the townhouses will not be visible from public viewpoints and will not impact the character or appearance of the conservation area. The replacement of windows located on the mews buildings will be in keeping with other modern window units which are visible on Atholl Crescent Lane and will not detract from the appearance of the area.

The proposal also includes removing all roof coverings to decking and rafters to allow new insulation to be installed. The roof profile will be unchanged and the existing slates are to be reused where possible. If slate is found to be damaged, Scot Slate will be prioritised on visible elevations with the use of Spanish Cupa 3 slate where required. Spanish slate is an acceptable substitute for Scots slate. This will not impact the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Conclusion in relation to the conservation area

The proposals will not adversely impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area. The proposals comply with Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

c) there are any other matters to consider?

The following matters have been identified for consideration:

Archaeology

The City Archaeologist was consulted on the scheme and has concluded that given the significant alterations made to the buildings throughout the twentieth century there are no known significant archaeological impacts nor implications in relation to the proposed scheme.

Equalities and human rights

Due regard has been given to section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010. No impacts have been identified.

Consideration has been given to human rights. No impacts have been identified through the assessment and no comments have been received in relation to human rights.

Public representations

A summary of the representations is provided below:

material considerations

- Loss of non-original basement stairs; this is addressed in section (a).
- Toilet pod inappropriate; this is addressed in section (a).
- Loss of fireplaces; this is addressed in section (a).
- Objects to replacement windows; this is addressed in section (a).
- Loss of internal doors; this is addressed in section (a).
- Loss of buffet recess at 14 Atholl Crescent; this is addressed in section (a).
- Subdivision of rooms and loss of walls; this is addressed in section (a).
- Non traditional doors to the rear of the townhouses, external fall guards and non traditional elements to rear of mews; this is addressed in section (a).

Conclusion in relation to other matters considered

There are no material considerations which outweigh the conclusion above.

Overall conclusion

The proposals are acceptable in terms of Sections 59 and 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. There are no material considerations which outweigh this conclusion.

Section C - Conditions/Reasons/Informatives

The recommendation is subject to the following;

Informatives

It should be noted that:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.
2. This consent is for Listed Building Consent only. Work must not begin until other necessary consents, eg Planning Permission, have been obtained.

Background Reading/External References

To view details of the application go to the [Planning Portal](#)

Further Information - Local Development Plan

Date Registered: 2 August 2021

Drawing Numbers/Scheme

01, 02A, 01, 02A-08A, 09B, 10A, 11A, 12B, 13B, 14A-18A19B, 20A, 22-34

Scheme 3

David Givan
Chief Planning Officer
PLACE
The City of Edinburgh Council

Contact: Christopher Sillick, Planning Officer
E-mail: christopher.sillick@edinburgh.gov.uk

Summary of Consultation Responses

NAME: Historic Environment Scotland

COMMENT: We have previously engaged with your Council and the applicant on this proposal through pre-application consultations, including a recent site visit with the agent, and had no issues with the proposed refurbishment of the modern mews building. We also particularly welcome the removal of the rear link at No.15, the reinstatement of the original townhouse entrance to No.16, and the reinstatement of a main stair to No.15. We do not have any comments to make regarding the proposals for the basement, second and third floors given the extent of their previous alteration as well as their lesser significance.

Our detailed comments below pertain to the ground and first floors. Whilst we consider their proposed alteration is much improved since our pre-application consultations, we suggest there may still be scope for a more sympathetic, bespoke approach.

The proposals will undoubtedly involve some adverse impacts to the townhouses, and further revisions in line with the above comments would be welcome. This would help ensure a more sympathetic conversion of the buildings, and alongside the most recent revisions, would largely protect the most significant surviving fabric within the listed buildings, thereby retaining their cultural significance.

DATE: 16 August 2021

NAME: Historic Environment Scotland

COMMENT: We note the new information recently submitted in support of the proposals, including a detailed window survey.

In our view, consideration should be given to the overhaul and upgrading of the original Georgian sashes in repairable condition (located on the lower floors) because they make a significant contribution to the category A listed buildings' special interest and character. We are content with the sympathetic replacement of all other later sash and case windows, which should in our view match the glazing pattern of the original windows i.e., six-over-six, with an equal division of the sashes, the current drawings showing a later pattern of unequal division. First floor sashes are six over nine. We consider this should be conditioned or additional drawings provided.

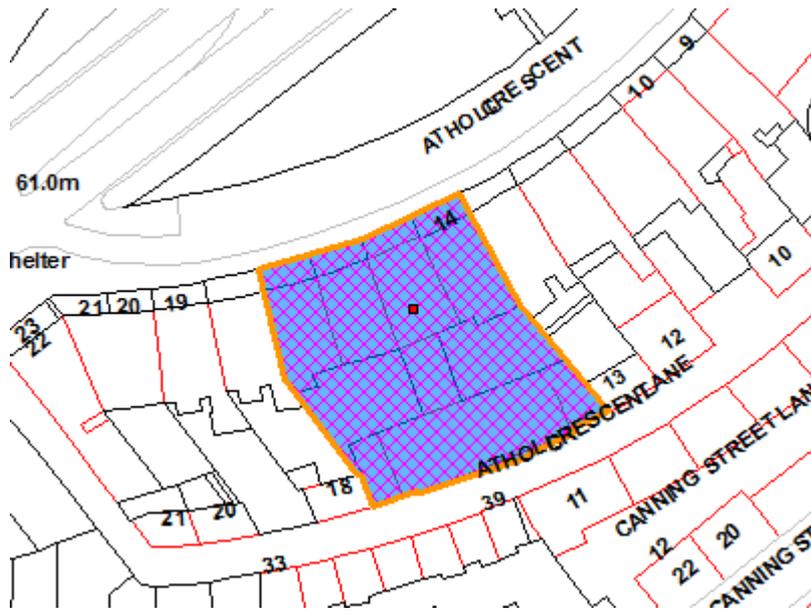
We also maintain the comments made in our previous LBC consultation response (dated 16th August 2021) about the ground and first floors and would suggest further revision is undertaken to protect the historic plan form of this A listed terrace. This excludes our advice on the treatment of original and historic doors, for which we welcome the revised proposals.

Our view is that the proposals do not raise historic environment issues of national significance and therefore we do not object.

DATE: 12 October 2022

The full consultation response can be viewed on the [Planning & Building Standards Portal](#).

Location Plan



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