

# Development Management Sub-Committee Report

**Wednesday 24 May 2023**

**Application for Conservation Area Consent  
15 Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh, EH16 5BH.**

**Proposal: Demolition of the Jointers' Workshop.**

**Item – Committee Hearing  
Application Number – 22/04769/CON  
Ward – B15 - Southside/Newington**

## **Reasons for Referral to Committee**

The application has been referred to the Development Management Sub-Committee because 8 material objections have been received and it is recommended for approval. Consequently, under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the application must be determined by the Development Management Sub-Committee.

### **Recommendation**

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

### **Summary**

The demolition of the existing building is acceptable in terms of Section 66 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and the interim HES guidance.

## **SECTION A – Application Background**

### **Site Description**

The application site measures 2.5 hectares and is located on the north side of Dalkeith Road to the east of Holyrood Park Road and west of Parkside Terrace. East Parkside runs adjacent to the north site boundary. The Old Town and city centre is approximately one mile to the north-west.

The site is occupied by the former Scottish Widows Headquarters building and its landscaped grounds which replaced a Baronial style printworks (Parkside Works), dating from 1872 with later additions. The current building is a category A-listed, modern Expressionist style, reinforced concrete, modular office by Sir Basil Spence, Glover and Ferguson constructed between 1972 and 1976 (reference LB50213, listed on 03.03.2006). The structure comprises a cluster of 12 interlocking hexagonal blocks ranging from one to four storeys in height, with a basement and sub-basement, with continuous curtain wall glazing formed in brown solar glass within bronzed metal frames. The open-plan layout follows the 'Burolandschaft' concept which evolved in German office architecture in the 1950s and 1960s and the hexagonal modular layout was influenced by the BP-Haus headquarters in Hamburg, although the dolerite formations of Salisbury Crags could also have inspired the design.

A concrete constructed, double-height undercroft car park and boiler house is located to the rear of the building in the northern section of the site, concealed beneath landscape terraces and a sunken garden area to the south-east of the car park. These structures connect to the main building via an underground tunnel.

The surrounding landscaping is integral to the building, occupying approximately 1.6 hectares of the site. The design was influenced by Dame Sylvia Crowe and transitions from a more formal character, with two reflecting pools and areas of lawn addressing the urban context of Dalkeith Road, to a naturally inspired landscape in the rear section of the site towards Holyrood Park. A key feature of the section is the landscaped decks over the undercroft car park. The original species mix comprised a selection of simple, robust, low level ground cover with a limited selection of hardy native trees. Some of this planting scheme is still evident, but much has been obscured by overgrowth and other invasive species. The seating areas along the walkway over the car park are later additions.

The subject of this application for conservation area consent is an L-plan former stable and carriage-house block, known as the Jointers' Workshop, at the far north-east corner of the site. The building is named after its most recent use as a training venue for electrical cable jointers. This structure is not listed and comprises a two-storey, squared sandstone constructed range with a longer east-west running wing. The stables and carriage house form the shorter north-south running wing. The longer wing has decorative crowstepped gables. An electricity substation sits on the site of the former coachman's house to the immediate south of the Jointer's Workshop behind a high sandstone wall and the gated vehicular entrance from Holyrood Park Road is flanked by stone piers. The Jointer's Workshop was built up against a warehouse that was demolished in 1981 and replaced by the current brick retaining wall along its eastern edge. The range was altered when converted to garages in 1925 and is now in very poor structural condition.

The site is within the South Side Conservation Area.

## **Description of the Proposal**

The application is for the substantial demolition of the Jointers' Workshop, retaining the front gable wall (propped up by a steel structure to the rear) and reconstruction of a short section of the flanking wall and roof behind the crowstepped gable facing Holyrood Park Road.

The existing slates will be reused to cover the part reconstructed roof, and a new stone gable wall will be erected to support this reconstructed section of roof and flanking wall. The rear stone walls of the Workshop will also be retained or reinstated to boundary wall height as reasonably practicable, and the existing brick wall at the northern end will be reduced in height for stabilisation purposes.

### Scheme 1

The original scheme proposed full demolition of the Workshop.

An associated application for planning permission has been submitted for the erection of a new residential development comprising 174 apartments in five separate blocks on the remainder of the site, including associated landscaping, parking and infrastructure (reference 22/04766/FUL).

A parallel application for listed building consent (reference 22/04768/LBC) has been submitted for the proposed demolitions and alterations of the listed structures on the site.

### **Relevant Site History**

No relevant site history.

### **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

Archaeologist

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

### **Publicity and Public Engagement**

**Date of Neighbour Notification:** 5 April 2023

**Date of Renotification of Neighbour Notification:** Not Applicable

**Press Publication Date(s):** 14 April 2023 14 October 2022

**Site Notices Date(s):** 11 April 2023 11 October 2022

**Number of Contributors:** 22

## Section B - Assessment

### Determining Issues

Consent is required because section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (the "1997 Heritage Act") states that in making a decision on the demolition of a building in a conservation area section 6 to 25 of the same Act shall have effect in relation to buildings in conservation areas as they have effect in relation to listed buildings. The proposals therefore require to be assessed in terms of Section 64 of the 1997 Heritage Act:

- Having due regard to HES Policy and guidance, does the proposed demolition 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 on demolition in a conservation area, 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 on demolition in a conservation area, 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) Demolition of building(s) is acceptable, or the proposals harm the character or appearance of the conservation area?**

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that in making a decision on the demolition of a building in a conservation area, certain provisions of the same Act shall have effect in relation to buildings in conservation areas as they have effect in relation to listed buildings.

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; and*
- *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.*

The South Side Conservation Area covers a large urban area which includes various historical periods and stages of development forming a variety of character areas with different spatial patterns. The character appraisal splits the conservation area into five sub-areas representing distinctive patterns of growth and development. This site falls within the "Fifth Expansion Area": a distinct section of the conservation area, added in March 2019, characterised by unique and individual buildings/groups of buildings within their own integral settings and the wider landscape setting of Holyrood Park. These buildings include the Royal Commonwealth Pool, former Scottish Widows Headquarters and Pollock Halls which, together, form an outstanding category A listed group.

The South Site Conservation Area Character Appraisal summarises the key characteristics of the Fifth Expansion Area as follows:

*"The urban grain of the area is coarser than much of the Conservation Area as it comprises large scale buildings that are set back from the pavement within open space. The settings of the existing building, and Pollock Halls contains trees and shrubs, and a linear tree group separates the latter from the Royal Commonwealth Pool's rear car park'. Less of the historic layout and fewer historic buildings remain within the area surrounding the site, which is largely modern and atypical of central Edinburgh. These further divert from the typical characteristics of the Conservation Area."*

The Jointers Workshop is of local historic significance as a survivor of the Edinburgh's industrial/commercial past and contributes to the character of this part of the conservation area.

However, the building is structurally unsound and in danger of collapse. Remedying its poor structural condition would involve the erection of complex supporting structures which would occupy the entire existing footprint, making any future use impractical. Also, there is an existing Scottish Water sewer running directly below the building, so the process of installing any propping framework would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. In addition, the cost of these works would outweigh the value of the building in terms of its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The proposed retention of a representative and significant part of the Jointers' Workshop will preserve the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area, especially in terms of the existing streetscape of Holyrood Park Road, which is partly defined by this remnant of the area's industrial past. The crowstepped gable wall and a typical part of the traditional range form will be retained, along with the original (or reconstructed) boundary walls demarcating the original extent of the workshop complex.

A condition has been applied to ensure that the level of salvage of the original sections of the Workshop is appropriate and that any new build elements of the Workshop and its boundary walls are appropriately detailed.

Normally, a condition would be attached to ensure that no structures are demolished prior to being notified of the start date for the associated main development on the wider site. However, this condition has not been applied due to the poor structural condition of the Workshop and potential need for demolition works to commence with short notice due to public safety concerns.

## **Conclusion**

The proposals are acceptable in terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

### **b) There are any other matters to consider?**

The following matters have been identified for consideration:

#### **Archaeological Remains**

The site lies within an area of archaeological significance, as the Scottish Widows headquarters was built on the site of the former Victorian Nelson and Sons Parkside Works, dating from 1870, and the Edinburgh Geographical Institute, dating from 1888.

Although not listed, the Jointers' Workshop is of local historic and archaeological significance as a survivor of the Edinburgh's industrial/commercial past and contributes to the local character of the conservation area.

Accordingly, a condition has been applied to ensure that a comprehensive programme of historic building recording is undertaken prior to and during demolition and that a provision for public/community engagement during this programme of archaeological work is put in place.

#### **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 objections*

- the height of the existing brick wall between the site and East Parkside should be kept consistent.

*The proposed wall height is designed to match the eaves height of the Jointers' Workshop whilst keeping the wall as stable as possible. The retention of this eaves height along the whole length of the wall would risk reducing its stability.*

### *support comments*

- demolition is acceptable as professional surveys have confirmed that the present structure is unsound and could not be made safely usable at reasonable cost;
- the revised proposal to retain the crowstepped east gable wall and erect a shortened, roofed building will conceal the essential supporting frame behind the gable and
- the retention of a north boundary wall at an appropriate height.

### *non-material comments*

The objection comments relating to the proposed development comprising the works to the listed office building and erection of a new residential development on the wider site, including the formation of an access gate between the site and East Parkside, are non-material to this application for conservation area consent. These grounds of objection are addressed in the associated applications for planning permission (reference 22/04766/FUL) and listed building consent ((reference 22/04768/LBC).

Also, the issues of ownership of the mutual brick wall and structural damage to nearby properties are non-material in planning terms.

### **Conclusion in relation to other matters considered**

The proposals do not raise any concerns in relation to other matters identified.

### **Overall conclusion**

The demolition of the existing building is acceptable in terms of Section 66 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and the interim HES guidance.

## **Section C - Conditions/Reasons/Informatives**

The recommendation is subject to the following;

### **Conditions**

1. Details of the proposed re-use of any materials/architectural features of the Joiners' Workshop and its associated boundary walls, and details of any proposed new materials shall be submitted to the Planning Authority for written approval before any demolition works commence.
2. No demolition/development shall take place on the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (historic building recording, public engagement, interpretation analysis and reporting, publication) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority. This shall include detailed surveys to be undertaken prior to and during demolition works.

## **Reasons**

1. In order to enable the planning authority to consider this/these matter/s in detail.
2. In order to safeguard the interests of archaeological heritage.

## **Background Reading/External References**

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

**Further Information - Local Development Plan**

**Date Registered: 22 September 2022**

## **Drawing Numbers/Scheme**

01 + 02A-09A

Scheme 2

**David Givan**  
**Chief Planning Officer**  
**PLACE**  
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## Summary of Consultation Responses

NAME: Historic Environment Scotland

COMMENT: The unlisted Joiner's workshop, an altered former stable block in the Scots Baronial style, makes a positive contribution to the South Side conservation area. Previously, we were minded to object to its full demolition. However, after receiving additional reports and discussing the case with our own conservation engineers, we accept there are significant issues with the building, including in its original construction, later alteration and ongoing structural movement to its walls and roof. The revised, more sympathetic approach now allows for the retention of the most significant gable onto Holyrood Park Road and rebuilding a small section of the side and rear walls in stone with reused slates on a new roof. While this approach would also entail the removal of the existing roof (agreed as necessary by our engineers) and rear sections of the unlisted building, we consider it would protect its most visible and architecturally significant element and we are therefore supportive of this revision. We would advise that the building is made accessible for some form of ongoing use, and that the low-carbon approach adopted to the wider development is followed here, with dressed stone, bricks, slates and any timber, salvaged for reuse in the rebuilding and elsewhere on site.

DATE: 1 May 2023

NAME: Archaeologist

COMMENT: The site lies within an area of archaeological significance, as the Scottish Widows headquarters was built on the site of the former Victorian Nelson and Sons Parkside Works, dating from 1870, and the Edinburgh Geographical Institute, dating from 1888.

Although not listed, the Joiners' Workshop is considered to be of local historic and archaeological significance as a survivor of the Edinburgh's industrial/commercial past and contributes to the local character of the conservation area.

Accordingly, a condition is required to ensure that a comprehensive programme of historic building recording is undertaken prior to and during demolition and that a provision for public/community engagement during this programme of archaeological work is put in place.

DATE: 9 November 2022

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

## Location Plan



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