

Summerhall Development Brief: (The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies)

Planning Committee
19 May 2011

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's endorsement of development principles contained in a development brief prepared to guide the reuse, restoration and redevelopment of The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Summerhall.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies is relocating to new facilities at Easter Bush, Midlothian. Once vacated, the school will become surplus to the requirements of the University of Edinburgh. To assist the disposal and planning application processes, the University has prepared a development brief to guide the reuse, restoration and redevelopment of school buildings. The development brief addresses heritage issues, among others, and considers the relative importance of the exteriors of buildings and principal internal spaces in order to identify where redevelopment may be possible within an overall framework for the site. The development brief concludes with a set of development principles which the Committee is asked to endorse.

3 Main report

Background

- 3.1 The Royal School of Veterinary Studies is one of four schools that form the University of Edinburgh's College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. In 2004, the University decided to relocate the College to a new purpose built campus facility at Easter Bush, Midlothian, to co-locate alongside existing animal hospitals. The University expects to complete the relocation of the College by the end of the summer to allow staff and students to commence the 2011/12 academic year in new accommodation. The site is presently being offered for sale on the open market.

- 3.2 Once vacated, the complex of buildings at Summerhall will be surplus to the University's requirements and made available for alternative uses. To assist this process, the University has prepared a development brief (attached as Appendix 1 to this report and known as the Summerhall Development Brief), in consultation with Council officers, Historic Scotland and specialist advisors, and is seeking the Council's endorsement of the development principles contained therein. This approach is consistent with the procedure approved by Committee on 6 August 2009.
- 3.3 The site poses significant challenges for a prospective developer, principally due to the character, appearance and condition of listed buildings that occupy much of the site. However its location within a conservation area and its prominence of its location at the east end of the Meadows make it attractive proposition for a prospective developer. Rather than leave these challenges to potential developers, and to provide certainty to the disposal and planning application processes, the University has engaged specialist advisors to prepare a development brief to guide the redevelopment of the school buildings.

The development brief

- 3.4 The development brief follows the conventional format of briefs prepared by the Council and starts with a description of the site and a statement of extant planning policies relevant to the site and the wider area. Subsequent sections of the brief consider acceptable land uses and other planning considerations, including architectural and heritage interests, before concluding with a summary urban analysis and statement of development principles. The preparation of the development brief has been informed by a community engagement exercise, the details of which are described in Appendix 2 attached to this report. Also contained in this appendix is a summary of the comments received and a response to the issues raised. Both the form and content of the development brief and the arrangements for the community engagement exercise were discussed with the Head of Planning prior to this work being undertaken.

Listed buildings: Hierarchy of Significance

- 3.5 A key element of the brief is the inclusion of a 'hierarchy of significance', which is a means of identifying the relative importance of the exteriors of buildings and principal internal spaces. The purpose of adopting such an approach is to offer general guidance and to identify spaces where redevelopment may be possible within an overall framework for the site. The use of this approach has been discussed in some detail with both council officers and Historic Scotland and has included two detailed site visits and a presentation to assess its suitability to this exercise. On the basis that the analysis undertaken by the University to inform this exercise is only sufficient to give an overview and does not replace the need for prospective developers to prepare a conservation statement or a full conservation plan, the Council and Historic Scotland are comfortable with this approach – a letter dated 21 April 2011 confirming Historic Scotland's position on this matter is available as a background paper to this report. Furthermore, this refined level of understanding would be required prior to pre-application discussions commencing with the Planning Service and

Historic Scotland, particularly if, as might be anticipated, proposals involve the adaptation of the principal spaces or structures on the site.

- 3.6 The categories, shown on pages 38 of the development brief, are intended to convey levels of relative significance and should not be equated directly with categories of special interest which already exist for historic buildings (SHEP July 2009, Note 2.19, p.58). The categories of significance are: high, significant, moderate, some significance, little or no significance.

External elevations and internal spaces

- 3.7 With regard to the external elevations of buildings the factors that have been taken into account in the assessment include townscape value, authenticity of the fabric, age and rarity, group, spatial and architectural values and recognition of the wider output of known designers or artists and historical associations. Similar considerations, within the same categories, have been taken into account with respect to the internal spaces, including their relationship with other internal spaces.

- 3.8 The principal heritage interests on the site are listed under two items on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and are:

1. Hope Park & Buccleuch Congregational Church, Hope Park Terrace (Category B) – an elaborately detailed building by Sutherland & Walker, 1876. The building was in use as a church at the time of its listing in April 1977 but was subsequently acquired by the University and incorporated into the Summerhall campus;
2. Summerhall, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (Category B) – consisting of three elements, all listed in March 2002:
 - a) an 11-bay Edwardian Baroque college building by David McArthur fronting onto Summerhall, built between 1909 and 1916 with later additions to the rear;
 - b) a substantial later addition, a 7-storey and basement laboratory tower situated at the corner of Summerhall and Hope Park Terrace in a New Brutalist style (Block D) by Reiach, Hall & Partners; and
 - c) a 4-storey rectangular-plan animal treatment facility, also in a New Brutalist style (Block B), also by Reiach, Hall & Partners.

- 3.9 In terms of the 'hierarchy of significance' adopted by the development brief, the external elevations of the former Hope Park & Buccleuch Congregational Church [1] and the front elevation of the main college building [2a] are recorded as being 'significant'. The external elevations of the 7-storey tower [2b] and the 4-storey animal treatment facility [2c] are recorded as having 'some significance' and 'little or no significance', respectively. Within the main college building the lecture theatre [2a] is considered to be of 'high' importance, while the main entrance lobby, hall and principal laboratory [2a] are all considered to be of 'significant' importance.

Land use

- 3.10 The development brief summaries a range of land uses that are considered acceptable in principle when assessed against the policies of the Edinburgh City Local Plan, including housing in a variety of forms, hotel, employment, institutional, leisure and retail uses of an appropriate scale and character. Reference is also made to the policies in the Plan on listed buildings that establish a strong presumption in favour of their retention, and on design principles.

Skyline

- 3.11 The Summerhall site lies within the viewing cones of a number of protected key views from the south of the City, essentially views to the north from Braids Hill Drive and Blackford Hill. These are described in general terms by the development brief and will be an important consideration for prospective developers should proposals come forward for new development on the corner of Hope Park Terrace and Summerhall. It should be noted that the prevailing height of the surrounding townscape is of a tenemental scale.

Summary of development principles

- 3.12 The development principles are presented on pages 34 to 38 of the brief under the headings of Integration, Movement and Space, and Heritage. Under the heading of 'integration' the principles state clearly the need to meet the targets and aspirations of the Council's Standards for Sustainable Building and promote an appropriate mix of uses while having regard to the amenity of existing and future residents of the area. With regard to 'movement and space' the brief requires developers to maximise access to the site by foot, cycle and public transport and to consider opportunities to enhance permeability and spaces through the site by creating new routes and public/private spaces. Finally, with regard to 'heritage' the brief requires future development proposals to be informed by the hierarchical significance of building exteriors and the principal internal spaces and highlights the need for further focussed research to inform development proposals, including the preparation of a conservation statement or full conservation plan.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

5 Equalities Impact

- 5.1 There is no relationship between the matters described in this report and the public sector general equality duty.
- 5.2 There is no direct equalities impact arising from this report.

6 Environmental Impact

6.1 There are no significant adverse environmental impacts arising from this report.

7 Conclusions

7.1 The University is to be commended for the approach that it has taken to the disposal of the School of Veterinary Studies and its engagement with the Council, Historic Scotland and the community. It has recognised that the reuse, restoration and redevelopment of the school buildings will be challenging and may involve the renewal, alteration and/or removal of listed elements on the site and that this is best addressed by identifying at this early stage those elements which are significant and require careful attention. This has been addressed by developing a Hierarchy of Significance which offers guidance on the relative importance of the listed fabric on the site and seeks to identify spaces where redevelopment may be possible within an overall framework. Both the Council and Historic Scotland are broadly comfortable with this approach and recognise that some interventions may be necessary in order to maintain the school buildings in acceptable and viable alternative uses. The preparation of the development brief does not remove the need for prospective developers to prepare a conservation statement or a full conservation plan prior to the comment pre-application discussions. The development brief will provide a context for these discussions and will be a material consideration in the assessment of proposals and planning applications as they come forward.

8 Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee endorses the development principles contained in the Summerhall Development Brief (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) to guide the reuse, restoration and redevelopment of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Summerhall.

Dave Anderson
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Appendices 1 Summerhall Development Brief, University of Edinburgh
 2 Summary of consultation exercise, comments and responses

Contact/tel/Email Andrew Sikes, Principal Planner
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Wards affected Ward 15 Southside / Newington

Single Outcome
Agreement

Single Outcome Agreement

Supports National Outcome 1:
We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe;

Edinburgh Outcome:
Edinburgh is an internationally competitive business location that attracts talent and investment to a growing knowledge based economy.

Supports National Outcome 3:
We are better educated, more skilled and more successful renowned for our research and innovation;

Supports National Outcome 12:
We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.

Background
Papers

Letter from Historic Scotland to GVA Grimley dated 21 April 2011 offering comments on the 'Hierarchy of Significance' approach adopted by the Summerhall Development Brief.