

# Development Management Sub Committee

**Wednesday 3 September 2014**

## **Application for Conservation Area Consent 12/04007/CON At Napier University Craighouse Campus, Craighouse Road, Edinburgh Demolition of Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Building.**

<b>Item number</b>	3.1(c)
<b>Report number</b>	
<b>Wards</b>	A09 - Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart

### **Summary**

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The proposal represents a departure from planning policy as the proposed replacement scheme on the site of the LRC building will neither enhance nor preserve the character and appearance of the Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area. However, the existing building is of no architectural merit and its removal is required to facilitate an enabling development to help safeguard the long-term future of the A-listed buildings on the wider site. A departure is justified in this instance.

### **Links**

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[Policies and guidance for this application](#)      LPC, CITE5, OTH, CRPCHI,

# Report

## **Application for Conservation Area Consent 12/04007/CON At Napier University Craighouse Campus, Craighouse Road, Edinburgh Demolition of Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Building.**

### **Recommendations**

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**1.1** It is recommended that this application be Granted. Background

#### **2.1 Site description**

The application site is the former Napier University campus situated at Easter Craiglockhart Hill.

The area of demolition extends solely to the Learning Resource Centre building located at the southern extremity of the site. The LRC building is 3-storeys high with a flat roof and is of modern design.

There are a number of mature trees to the south of the building that mark the campus boundary. The main campus buildings, which are A-listed, are located to the north of the LRC building.

This application site is located within the Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area.

#### **2.2 Site History**

13 September 2001 - An application for the development of a new arts faculty building and minor works to existing 'A' listed building was withdrawn (Application reference - 01/01435/FUL).

24 September 2001 - An application for the development of a new arts faculty building and minor works to existing 'A' listed building was withdrawn (Application reference - 01/01435/LBC).

24 May 2002 - Listed building consent was granted for minor works to basement area of New Craig in conjunction with development of new arts facility building (Application reference - 01/04599/LBC).

26 June 2007 - Permission was granted for the development of a new arts facility building, new surface car park and minor works to existing 'A' listed building (Application reference 01/04599/FUL).

19 September 2012 - An application for the modification of clause (fourth) and clause (seventh) of the legal agreement relating to application no. 01/04599/FUL was withdrawn (Application reference - 12/02261/OBL).

22 November 2012 - Permission was granted for the modification of clause (fourth) and clause (seventh) of the legal agreement relating to application no. 01/04599/FUL (Application reference - 12/03397/OBL).

There have also been several applications for minor works relating to the operation of the university estate.

### Related applications

An application for planning permission has been submitted for the proposed change of use and conversion of existing buildings from university campus to residential and for the construction of new build residential, together with ancillary development, public realm, utilities infrastructure including access roads, car parking and landscaping (Application reference - 12/04007/SCH3). That application is also being considered at this Committee meeting.

An application for listed building consent has been submitted for the proposed change of use and conversion of existing listed buildings at New Craig, Queen's Craig, East Craig, Bevan Villa, South Craig, Craighouse Lodge, Old Craighouse to form residential properties including an extension at South Craig and Bevan Villa (Application reference - 12/04007/LBC). That application is also being considered at this Committee meeting.

## **Main report**

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### **3.1 Description Of The Proposal**

Conservation area consent is sought for the demolition of the learning resource centre building to enable redevelopment.

A conservation plan has been submitted in support of the application, which is available to view via Planning and Building Standards online services.

### **3.2 Determining Issues**

Do the proposals harm the character or appearance of the conservation area? If they do, there is a strong presumption against granting of consent.

### **3.3 Assessment**

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

- a) the proposed demolition will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- b) the new building will preserve or enhance the appearance of the conservation area and is of sufficient quality;
- c) the proposal will have any detrimental impact on equalities and human rights;
- d) there are any other material considerations; and
- e) there are any material issues raised in representations.

a) The Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area Character Appraisal states that *the essential character of the Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area derives from its significant cluster of Victorian institutions within a very high quality landscape and topographic setting. The Craighouse complex has a strong unity of composition derived from the inter-relationship of buildings, woodlands, open spaces and views over the city. The buildings form a homogeneous group round the old mansion, as they are closely related in design, layout and materials. This character has remained largely unchanged since the late 19th century. The conversion of the site by Napier University has maintained the essential historic and architectural character, and conserved and enhanced the surrounding landscape.*"

The character appraisal highlights the prominent role that the historic buildings and the landscape setting of Craighouse campus play in creating the special character and appearance of Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area. Particular mention is made of the conformity of design, layout and materials. However, the Learning Resource Centre is a modern addition of poor aesthetic quality that does not relate to any of the existing listed buildings on the site. It also doesn't make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the conservation area by reason of its design and external finishes. Whilst the building is structurally sound and discreetly located its demolition is required in order to minimise the amount of space that will be developed as part of the wider masterplan. As the landscape setting of the campus is an important feature of the conservation area it is imperative that the opportunity to reuse previously developed land is realised.

Given the limited contribution that the building makes to the character and appearance of the conservation area and its demolition is required as part of a comprehensive masterplan for the entire campus, as set out in section d) of this assessment, the proposed demolition can be supported in this instance.

b) The proposed replacement building forms part of the overall development of the site which is the subject of a separate application for planning permission (12/04007/SCH3). The replacement building is referred to as Clouston Villa. The demolition of the LRC building, which has little architectural merit offers the opportunity to introduce a building of better quality to this part of the site. Whilst the replacement building will essentially cover the same footprint, it will, along with the other new build elements, by virtue of its scale and design compete with the existing listed buildings resulting in a change to how these buildings are read and understood. The proposals will alter the existing balance between the landscape and built form with the cumulative effect of existing buildings and new development becoming dominant and the high quality landscape setting being weakened. Therefore, the proposed replacement development will neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

c) Equalities and human rights

This application has been assessed in terms of equalities and human rights. No impact has been identified.

#### d) Other material considerations

The application site contains a collection of listed buildings that form a prominent feature within the city. Those buildings are currently vacant and given the importance of the buildings it is critical that a compatible use is found that will secure their long-term future. Residential use, as proposed, is compatible and is supported by planning policy. However, the conversion of these buildings in their own right has been found not to be economically viable and subsequently an element of new build is required to form an enabling development. Part of the proposed new build is to be located on the site of the LRC building in order to minimise the encroachment into the open landscape. Therefore, the demolition of the LRC building, which makes no positive contribution to the conservation area, is necessary in order to help safeguard the long-term future of the listed buildings.

#### e) Representations

##### **Material Comments**

- Removing the LRC would only be to make way for unjustified and unacceptable new build and car parking; - the replacement building forms part of the concurrent application for an enabling development which will secure the long term future use of the existing category A listed buildings on the site. This development site was considered appropriate given there is already a building located here which is not of particular merit and it presents the opportunity for a better quality replacement.
- The woodland around this building is full of bats and demolition would be disruptive; - a bat survey has been undertaken as part of the concurrent full planning application and mitigation measures have been proposed to ensure minimal disruption to any roosts. The applicants will also be required to seek the appropriate SNH licence prior to any works commencing on site.
- The enabling case for the detailed application for which this application is an essential element, has not been made or submitted to the public; - details of the financial case have been made available to the public as part of the application for full planning permission.
- The developer proposes to replace the already unsightly LRC with an even more unsightly 8-storey modern building; - the quality of the proposed replacement scheme has been assessed in section 3.3 b) of this report.

##### **General Comments**

- It is unclear from the application what the CON includes; - the description of the proposal clearly states that the application relates to the demolition of the LRC building.
- Cannot tell from the documents what the demolition would entail, whether trees would be removed or affected by this demolition; - the impact upon trees has been assessed in the concurrent application for planning permission.

- It is unclear whether there is more than the demolition of the Learning Resource Centre included in this application; - the description of the proposal clearly states that the application relates to the demolition of the LRC building.
- The application is based on the case for enabling development of which there is no official record; - the enabling case is documented in the concurrent application for planning permission.
- Should be preserved in a much needed educational function; - the University use has now ceased and the planning authority has a duty to determine proposals before them.
- Do not object to the demolition of the LRC but would like reassurance that the area will not be left a building site for years while a new plan for the site is still uncertain; - a phasing plan has been provided as part of the estate management strategy and is assessed in the concurrent application for planning permission.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the proposal represents a departure from planning policy as the proposed replacement scheme on the site of the LRC building will neither enhance nor preserve the character and appearance of the Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area. However, the existing building is of no architectural merit and its removal is required to facilitate an enabling development to help safeguard the long-term future of the A-listed buildings on the wider site. A departure is justified in this instance.

It is recommended that the Committee approves this application.

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

### **3.4 Conditions/reasons/informatives**

#### **Conditions:-**

1. The application shall be notified to the Scottish Ministers prior to determination.

#### **Reasons:-**

1. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.

#### **Informatives:-**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

## **Financial impact**

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### **4.1 The financial impact has been assessed as follows:**

There are no financial implications to the Council.

## **Risk, Policy, compliance and governance impact**

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

## **Equalities impact**

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### **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**

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### **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**

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### **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 advertised on 23 November 2012. There has been a total of 14 representations received. Of that total, 1 has been submitted in support of the proposals, 12 are opposed and 1 offers general comments.

The main points of objection/concern can be summarised as follows:

- Quality of the proposed replacement scheme;
- Impact upon protected species; and
- Enabling development case.

Craiglockhart Community Council raise no objections to the demolition of the LRC building.

Merchiston and Morningside Community Councils have not offered any comments on the proposed demolition of the LRC building.

## Background reading / external references

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- To view details of the application go to
- [Planning and Building Standards online services](#)

### David R. Leslie

#### Statutory Development

##### Plan Provision

The application site is identified within the Edinburgh City Local Plan as being part of a wider area of open space. The site is also identified as part of an Area of Great Landscape Value and being within the Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area. Part of the site is within a Local Nature Reserve and part is within a Local Nature Conservation Site.

##### Date registered

12 November 2012

##### Drawing numbers/Scheme

01-11,

Scheme 1

Acting Head of Planning and Building Standards

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## Links - Policies

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### Relevant Policies:

#### Relevant policies of the Edinburgh City Local Plan.

Policy Env 5 (Conservation Areas – Demolition of Buildings) sets out criteria for assessing proposals involving demolition of buildings in conservation areas.

#### Other Relevant policy guidance

The Craiglockhart Hills Conservation Area Character Appraisal emphasises the outstanding quality of the natural topography and its visual relationship with the city, the high quality buildings set within a mixture of wooded and open slopes, the use of natural stone and slate as the traditional building materials.

# Appendix 1

## Application for Conservation Area Consent 12/04007/CON At Napier University Craighouse Campus, Craighouse Road, Edinburgh Demolition of Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Building.

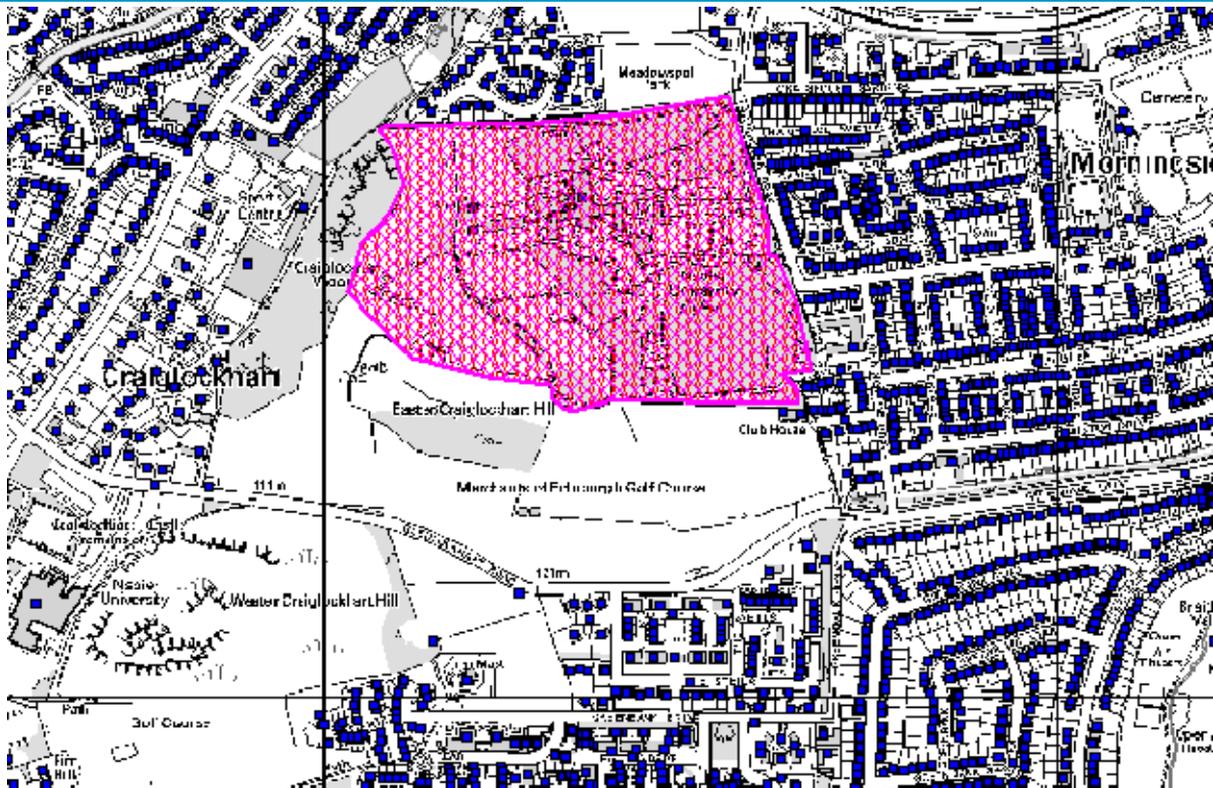
### Consultations

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No consultations undertaken.

### Location Plan

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