

**Conservation Area Consent 05/03096/CON**  
**at**  
**59-63 George IV Bridge**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH1 1EW**

---

**Development Quality Sub-Committee**  
**of the Planning Committee**

---

**1 Purpose of report**

To consider application 05/03096/CON, submitted by The Mound Property Company Limited. The application is for: **To take down the majority of the building to level of George IV Bridge, but to retain the lower 2 floor slabs and all retaining structures**

It is recommended that this application be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions in Appendix B.

**2 The Site and the Proposal**

**Site description**

The application relates to a prominent site on the west side of George IV Bridge, on its corner with the Lawnmarket/Royal Mile to the north, and the corner of Victoria Street to the south. It is adjacent to Baden Powell House on Victoria Terrace. The site consists of the former Lothian Region Council Headquarters, two category A listed buildings which front onto the Lawnmarket, the closes which run between these buildings - Fisher's Close, Brodie's Close and Buchanan Court, and part of Victoria Terrace.

The former Regional Council Building, which fronts George IV Bridge, was designed and constructed between 1965 and 1970 by the architects Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall. This building is eight storeys high with two levels of basement, the lower basement containing a car park accessed via a ramp

on Victoria Street. It is described as an unrelieved International Modern style consisting of a series of pre-cast concrete floor units resting on a series of in-situ cast concrete slabs. These are supported laterally with shear walls in the form of stair and lift cores, in effect giving the building a 'deck of cards' appearance.

The site lies within the heart of the Old Town within a prominent and elevated location. The surrounding area is characterised by a variety of architectural styles, which include the medieval form of the buildings on the Lawnmarket/Royal Mile, the ecclesiastical gothic and Italianate fronted buildings of Victoria Street and the more classical style of architecture along George IV Bridge.

The site lies within the Old Town Conservation Area and is also within the World Heritage Site.

### **Site history**

June 2005 - application ref. no. 05/01231/LBC - listed building consent granted for refurbishment of existing building and alterations to existing Parliament square door.

June 2005 - application ref. no. 05/01231/CEC - planning permission granted for refurbishment of existing building and alterations to existing Parliament square door.

June 2004 - application ref. no. 04/01671/GDT - no objections raised for planning permission for renewal of application 03/00973/GDT.

May 2004 - application ref. no. 04/01206/ADV - application withdrawn for Scottish Parliament logo website address and phone number.

May 2003 - application ref. no. 03/00973/GDT - no objections raised for consent for window advertisements.

May 2002 - application ref. no. 02/00970/CEC - planning permission granted for installation of wall mounted CCTV camera.

November 2001 - application ref. no. 01/03077/LBC - listed building consent granted for installation of temporary extract fan for the duration of Scottish Parliament Interim.

Concurrent applications for the redevelopment of the building and listed building consent for 302-304 Lawnmarket are considered under separate reports.

## **Description of the Proposal**

The application seeks consent for the demolition of the former Lothian Region Council Building to allow for the redevelopment of the site. It is proposed to demolish all of the upper floors whilst retaining the basement substructure. As such all elements of the building above ground level will be demolished. An application for planning permission has been submitted for a mixed use development on the site. This will incorporate a hotel, bars restaurants, retail units and leisure facilities, a bank with ancillary offices, services and underground parking within the existing basement sub-structure.

The agents have submitted a supporting statement which is available in the Party Group Rooms.

## **3 Officer's Assessment and Recommendations**

### **DETERMINING ISSUES**

The determining issues are:

- Do the proposals preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area; there being a strong presumption against the granting of planning permission if this is not the case;
- Do the proposals comply with the development plan;
- If the proposals do comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for not approving them;
- If the proposals do not comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for approving them.

### **ASSESSMENT**

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

- a) The proposed demolition will adversely affect the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- b) The proposals for the redevelopment of the cleared site are acceptable.

Local Plan policy does not support the loss of unlisted buildings within conservation areas which contribute to its character and appearance. The retention of the building has been investigated in detail based on its historic significance. It has been established that to reuse it for a variety of different uses would ultimately require the demolition of more than 60% of the existing

structure in order that the necessary fire escapes, public space accommodation, etc could be provided.

The building represents a significant piece of 1960s style architecture by a prominent Edinburgh architects practice (RMJM) and is situated in a highly prominent location, where the Royal Mile meets the Mound. The building seeks to define the perimeter of the site and uses a plan form which is derived from the medieval herringbone plan form of the Old Town. While the architecture is bold, and clearly of its time, it does not successfully respond to the townscape context and in particular the public edge. The strong horizontal emphasis of the façade to George the IV Bridge conflicts with the site's topography and results in a unified imposing form, particularly when viewed in the context of the highly articulated roofscape of the Old Town. The solidity of the building creates a very defensive edge to the pedestrian edge. While the site addresses three important public edges, the building only contains one very understated entrance. This site is located at an important pedestrian node and offers the opportunity to create a more direct relationship between internal and external space. While the building contains extensive areas of natural stone, the horizontal white precast panels and flush finished strip windows produce elevations which lack the richness of the Old Town and have an uneasy relationship with the traditional architecture which prevails.

The existing building detracts from the character of this outstanding conservation area and the redevelopment of the site represents an opportunity to address the challenges by creating a more appropriate building of the highest architectural standard.

It is, therefore, considered that the demolition works are acceptable in principle.

b) An application for the redevelopment of the cleared site has also been submitted and these proposals are considered to be acceptable.

There is an appropriate scheme for the redevelopment of the site and as such the principle of the demolition of the former Lothian Region Council building is acceptable.

A condition is attached requiring that no buildings be demolished until a contract for the redevelopment has been let to ensure that the site does not become derelict and unsightly.

It is recommended that the Committee approves this application, subject to the above condition and referral to Scottish Ministers.

Alan Henderson

**Alan Henderson**  
Head of Planning and Strategy

<b>Contact/tel</b>	Emma Wilson- Wednesday, Thursday And Alternate Fridays Only on 0131 529 3634 (FAX 529 3717)
<b>Ward affected</b>	32 - Tollcross
<b>Local Plan</b>	Central Edinburgh Local Plan
<b>Statutory Development Plan Provision</b>	
<b>Date registered</b>	13 September 2005
<b>Drawing numbers/ Scheme</b>	01 - 41 Scheme 1

**Advice to Committee Members and Ward Councillors**

The full details of the application are available for viewing on the Planning and Building Control Portal: [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning).

If you require further information about this application you should contact the following Principal Planner, Ian Dryden on 0131 529 3464. Email: [ian.dryden@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:ian.dryden@edinburgh.gov.uk).

If this application is not identified on the agenda for presentation, and you wish to request a presentation of this application at the Committee meeting, you must contact Committee Services by 9.00a.m. on the Tuesday preceding the meeting on extension 4229/4239. Alternatively, you may e-mail [blair.ritchie@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:blair.ritchie@edinburgh.gov.uk) or [sarah.bogunovic@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.bogunovic@edinburgh.gov.uk)

**Application Type** Conservation Area Consent  
**Application Address:** 59-63 George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1EW  
**Proposal:** To take down the majority of the building to level of George IV Bridge, but to retain the lower 2 floor slabs and all retaining structures  
**Reference No:** 05/03096/CON

---

## Consultations, Representations and Planning Policy

### Consultations

#### Archaeology

*The former Council HQ was built in the late 1960s to a design by Robert Matthew and occupy a prominent location on Edinburgh's Royal Mile at the centre of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site. Accordingly this area is recognised as being of considerable archaeological and historic significance as demonstrated by the adjacent and linked post-medieval tenements of 302-304 High Street.*

*It is essential that these buildings are protected from damage during and after demolition. Accordingly the developer must submit for approval and prior to demolition commencing, a mitigation strategy which will meet this policy and a condition must be attached to any consent to ensure this.*

#### Representations

The application was advertised on 14 October 2005. Two letters have been received, one from the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland and one from the Old Town Association, objecting to the proposals on the following grounds:

- Demolition of the building prior to planning permission for the appropriate redevelopment of the site;
- Loss of a building important to the City's architectural heritage.

***Full copies of the representations made in respect of this application are available in Group Rooms or can be requested for viewing at the Main Reception, City Chambers, High Street.***

## **Planning Policy**

### **Central Edinburgh Local Plan**

Mixed Activities Zone, Old Town Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

#### Relevant Policies:

Policy CD4 (CONSERVATION AREAS) requires that developments in a conservation area retain all features which contribute to the area's character and appearance.

Policy CD5 (CONSERVATION AREAS - REDEVELOPMENT) sets out the criteria against which new development in conservation areas will be assessed, and seeks to preserve or enhance their character and appearance.

**Application Type** Conservation Area Consent  
**Application Address:** 59-63 George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1EW  
**Proposal:** To take down the majority of the building to level of George IV Bridge, but to retain the lower 2 floor slabs and all retaining structures  
**Reference No:** 05/03096/CON

---

## Conditions/Reasons associated with the Recommendation

### Recommendation

It is recommended that this application be **GRANTED**

### Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than five years from the date of this consent.
2. No demolition shall take place until the contract for the new development has been let, and written evidence of this has been made available to and accepted in writing by the Head of Planning & Strategy.
3. The application shall be referred to the Scottish Ministers prior to determination.

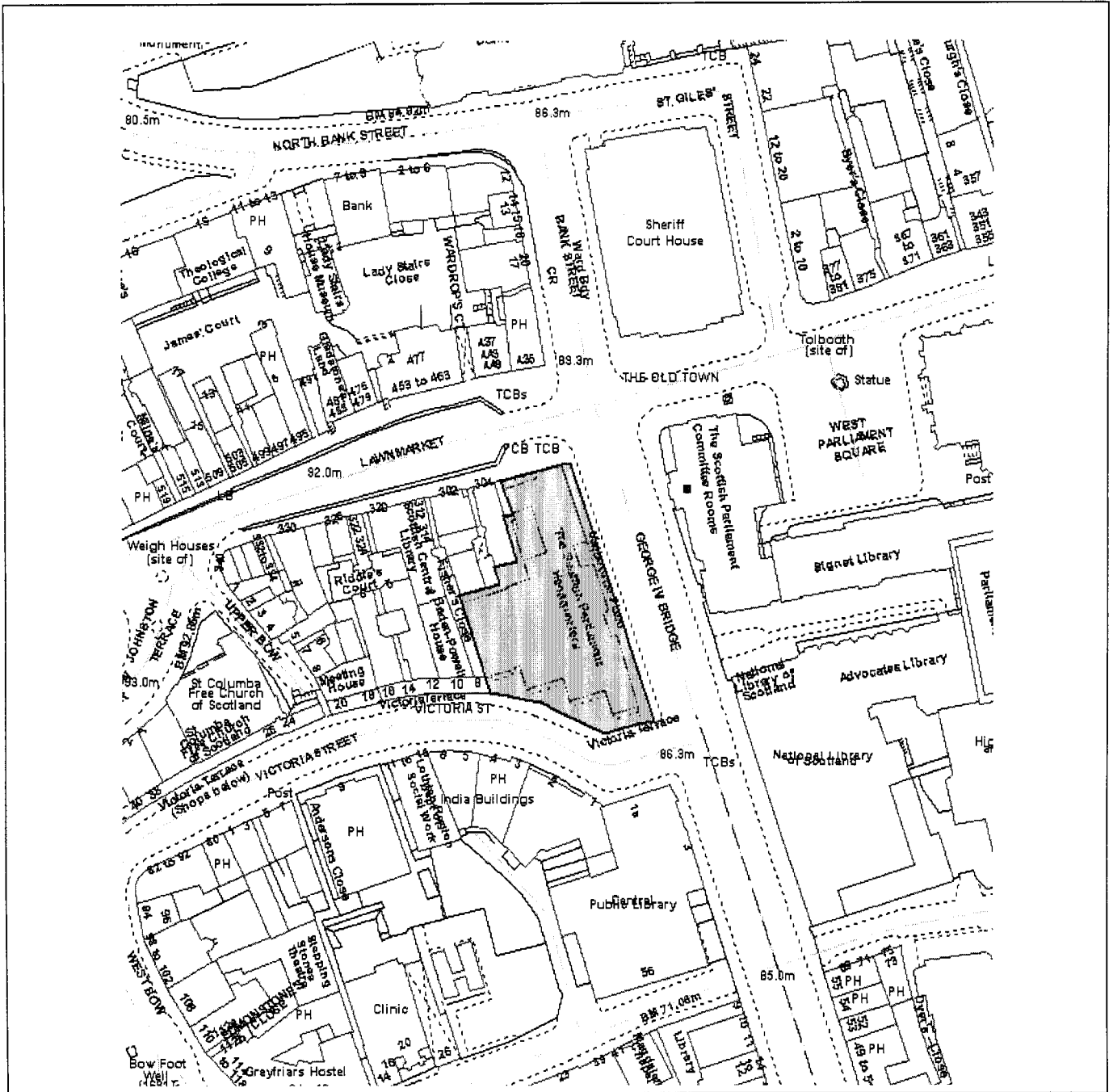
### Reasons

1. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.
2. In order to safeguard the character of the conservation area.
3. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.

---

End





Reproduction from the Ordnance Survey mapping with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence Number 100023420 The City of Edinburgh Council 2004.

# **PLANNING APPLICATION**

<b>Address</b>	<b>59-63 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EW</b>		
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>To take down the majority of the building to level of George IV Bridge, but to retain the lower 2 floor slabs and all</b>		
<b>Application number:</b>	<b>05/03096/CON</b>	<b>WARD</b>	<b>32- Tollcross</b>

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL  
 THE CITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT- PLANNING & STRATEGY