

Development Management Sub Committee

Tuesday 25 April 2017

**Application for Listed Building Consent 16/04580/LBC
At Boroughmuir High School, 26 Viewforth, Edinburgh
Conversion of Boroughmuir High School to form residential
accommodation. Demolition of existing outbuildings and
erection of new residential block (as amended).**

Item number	6.1(b)
Report number	
Wards	A10 - Meadows/Morningside

Summary

The proposal complies with Edinburgh Local Development Plan Policies Env 4 and Env 6 as it is justified, will not result in unnecessary damage to historic structures, and will not diminish the character of the listed building, or adversely affect the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Outcome of previous Committee

This application was previously considered by Committee on 22.03.2017.

Links

[Policies and guidance for this application](#) LEN04, LEN06, NSLBCA,

Report

Application for Listed Building Consent 16/04580/LBC At Boroughmuir High School, 26 Viewforth, Edinburgh Conversion of Boroughmuir High School to form residential accommodation. Demolition of existing outbuildings and erection of new residential block (as amended).

Recommendations

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

Background

2.1 Site description

The application property is Boroughmuir High School. This is a category B listed building, reference 30040, listed on 12 December 1974. It is a three storey with basement and attic, symmetrical, rectangular double quadrangle-plan freestyle Renaissance school with Byzantine details, designed by John Alexander Carfrae, 1911-14.

The building is on the east side of Viewforth, lying between Westhall Gardens, Admiral Terrace and Viewforth Square. The surrounding area is primarily residential, with a mix of tenements and terraced houses.

This application site is located within the Marchmont, Meadows and Bruntsfield Conservation Area.

2.2 Site History

There are concurrent applications for conservation area consent and planning permission to convert the school building to residential use, with associated works, reference 16/04579/CON and 16/04581/FUL.

Main report

3.1 Description Of The Proposal

Listed building consent is sought for the conversion of the former school building to form residential accommodation, for external alterations to an existing annex building, and for the demolition of three existing outbuildings attached to the main building.

Internal Alterations

The removal of existing corridor walls and conversion of classrooms into 87 flats, including formation of mezzanines towards the rear of the respective spaces on all floors (i.e. away from the windows).

The existing annex building to the north of the school is to be converted to eight flats by the addition of partition walls.

External Alterations

On the front elevation, it is proposed to increase the height of five windows on the front of the central bay at roof level. On the rear elevation, it is proposed to increase the height of three windows on the rear of the central bay at roof level, and three at ground level.

Ten window openings are to be re-instated on the rear elevation after the annex building is demolished.

Six windows are to be enlarged on the north elevation.

New window openings will be formed within the courtyard elevations, and rooflights will be added to the inward-facing roofplanes.

Steel and timber stairways are to be formed within the courtyards on each floor, and new stairs are to be formed within the annex building to facilitate the conversion to flats.

Demolition

Three buildings are to be demolished within the curtilage of the school. One is a link between an annex and the main school building, and two are smaller annex buildings set behind the main school building, but attached to the listed building.

Demolition of the detached, single storey teaching building in front of the main building does not require listed building consent.

Existing roofs within the courtyards are to be removed.

Scheme 2 differs from Scheme 1 in respect of internal layout and addition of windows on internal elevations. These changes were made to incorporate internal protected stairs within the apartments. This necessitated realignment of bathrooms and bedrooms in certain flats.

3.2 Determining Issues

In considering whether to grant consent, special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. For the purposes of this issue, preserve, in relation to the building, means preserve it either in its existing state or subject only to such alterations or extensions as can be carried out without serious detriment to its character.

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

3.3 Assessment

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

- a) The proposals will harm the architectural or historic interest of the listed building or adversely affect the special character or appearance of the conservation area;
- b) The representations raise any issues to be addressed; and
- c) Equalities and human rights impacts have been addressed.

a) Impact on the character of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area

The adopted Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP) policy Env 4 states that "Proposals to alter or extend a listed building will be permitted where

- a) those alterations or extensions are justified;
- b) there will be no unnecessary damage to historic structures or diminution of its interest; and
- c) where any additions are in keeping with other parts of the building".

The alterations to the main school building to convert it to residential use are justified on the basis that they focus on the courtyards which are of secondary importance. The main facade is left largely unaltered. It is preferable to have the building converted to residential use than to be left vacant. The removal of the infill development within the courtyards and the addition of walkways to facilitate the residential use is an innovative use of space away from public views which will not diminish the interest of the building.

Non-statutory guidance for Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas states that window openings "play an important role in establishing the character of an elevation and they should not be altered in their proportions or details". The proposed minor increase in window heights on the facade and rear elevations can be satisfactorily absorbed by the scale and massing of the building, and is justified in allowing greater levels of natural light into what will be living space. The proposed window alterations and erection of an external stair on the rear annex building will not result in any loss of original fabric and will not diminish the interest of what is a smaller building which is subordinate in terms of importance and presence to the main school building.

The addition of mezzanines within the high-ceilinged classrooms allows the general retention of the floorplan, and their positioning away from the principal and rear elevations reduces their visual prominence.

The plan form of the building is generally retained, as the existing classrooms are used to dictate the form of the conversion. The corridors will be lost, but these are of considerably lesser significance in terms of the floorplan. The key elements of the floorplan, which are the main and secondary staircases and the classrooms, will be retained.

There will be no unacceptable loss of historic fabric in the main school building. The demolition of the existing outbuildings will be acceptable, as these are minor later additions to the school building which do not make a strong, positive contribution to its character. The removal of largely unsympathetic later additions from the courtyards will be beneficial in re-opening these parts of the building and improving its character without any adverse impact on its appearance.

The impact of the demolition of the outbuildings on the character and appearance of the conservation area is addressed in the application for conservation area consent, reference 16/04579/CON.

The external works to the listed building which will be publicly visible are generally restricted to window enlargements and re-instatements. These will preserve the appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with LDP policy Env 6. The formation of walkways within the courtyard areas will not harm the character of the conservation area.

Historic Environment Scotland has not objected to the proposal. Having regard to their concerns about the window alterations on the central bay, officer's are satisfied that these will have no adverse impact on the character of the listed building. Such is the imposing scale of the building that these minor interventions will reflect the changing nature of the use of the building without harming its character.

The proposal complies with LDP policy Env 4 as the work is justified, will not result in unnecessary damage to historic structures, will not diminish the interest of the listed building, and the proposed alterations are in keeping with other parts of the building.

The proposed works will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, as the buildings to be removed do not make a strong, positive contribution to the character or appearance. The extent of alterations to the main building is minimal, as the major interventions relate either to areas which are not publicly visible, to secondary parts of the building, or to modern elements. The proposal is compatible with LDP policy Env 6.

b) Representations

Material representations in objection

The design and materials are not appropriate. This has been addressed in part 3.3.a).

Non-material representations in objection

It should be noted that more than half of the objections to the listed building consent application were made with reference to the erection of the affordable housing block and various issues arising from its erection, such as loss of privacy, overshadowing, and loss of view. The erection of the new affordable housing block does not require listed building consent, as it is not physically attached to the listed building. Therefore, these are grounds of objection which are non-material simply because they are not material to the assessment of a listed building consent application.

Loss of amenity by reason of additional noise from occupied flats. This does not form part of the assessment of an application for listed building consent.

The new block will harm the setting of the listed building. This is a matter for assessment as part of the application for planning permission, reference 16/04581/FUL.

The proposal is overdevelopment of the site. This is a matter for assessment as part of the application for planning permission, reference 16/04581/FUL.

Loss of parking / Road safety issues. This does not form part of the assessment of an application for listed building consent.

The affordable housing provision is of low quality. This does not form part of the assessment of an application for listed building consent.

The proposal will harm property values. This is not a planning matter.

The historical legacy of the building should be preserved. This has been addressed in part 3.3.a).

c) Equalities and human rights impacts

This application has no impact in terms of equalities and human rights.

Conclusion

The proposal complies with the adopted Edinburgh Local Development Plan policies Env 4 and Env 6 as it is justified, will not result in unnecessary damage to historic structures, and will not diminish the character of the listed building, or adversely affect the character and appearance of the conservation area.

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

3.4 Conditions/reasons/informatives

Informatives

It should be noted that:

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

Financial impact

4.1 The financial impact has been assessed as follows:

All financial implications of this Council project are matters for consideration by Education, Children and Families Committee.

Risk, Policy, compliance and governance impact

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

Equalities impact

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

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

8.1 Pre-Application Process

Pre-application discussions took place on this application.

8.2 Publicity summary of representations and Community Council comments

In total, 57 representations have been received, all objecting to the proposal. The matters raised in representations are addressed in part 3.3).

Background reading/external references

- To view details of the application go to
- [Planning and Building Standards online services](#)
- [Planning guidelines](#)
- [Conservation Area Character Appraisals](#)
- [Edinburgh Local Development Plan](#)
- [Scottish Planning Policy](#)

Statutory Development

Plan Provision

Date registered 22 September 2016

Drawing numbers/Scheme 01-11, 12A, 13A-17A, 18, 19, 20A-25A, 26-38,

Scheme 2

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Links - Policies

Relevant Policies:

LDP Policy Env 4 (Listed Buildings - Alterations and Extensions) identifies the circumstances in which alterations and extensions to listed buildings will be permitted.

LDP Policy Env 6 (Conservation Areas - Development) sets out criteria for assessing development in a conservation area.

Non-statutory guidelines 'LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS' provides guidance on repairing, altering or extending listed buildings and unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

Appendix 1

Application for Listed Building Consent 16/04580/LBC At Boroughmuir High School, 26 Viewforth, Edinburgh Conversion of Boroughmuir High School to form residential accommodation. Demolition of existing outbuildings and erection of new residential block (as amended).

Consultations

Historic Environment Scotland

The opening of the new Boroughmuir High School in 2017 will result in the existing B-listed building at Viewforth becoming vacant, unless a new use is identified. We therefore welcome the preparation of these detailed proposals for conversion of the building to residential use.

Designed in a Renaissance style by the talented architect John Carfrae and built between 1911 and 1914, Boroughmuir is considered to be one of the most significant architectural achievements of Edinburgh's School Board.

A residential conversion scheme will inevitably require a range of alterations into the historic fabric and original internal plan-form of the building, some of which will be more impactful on the special interest of the listed building. Having undertaken a desk based assessment of the application and supporting material, we consider that overall these impacts do not raise significant issues for the historic environment.

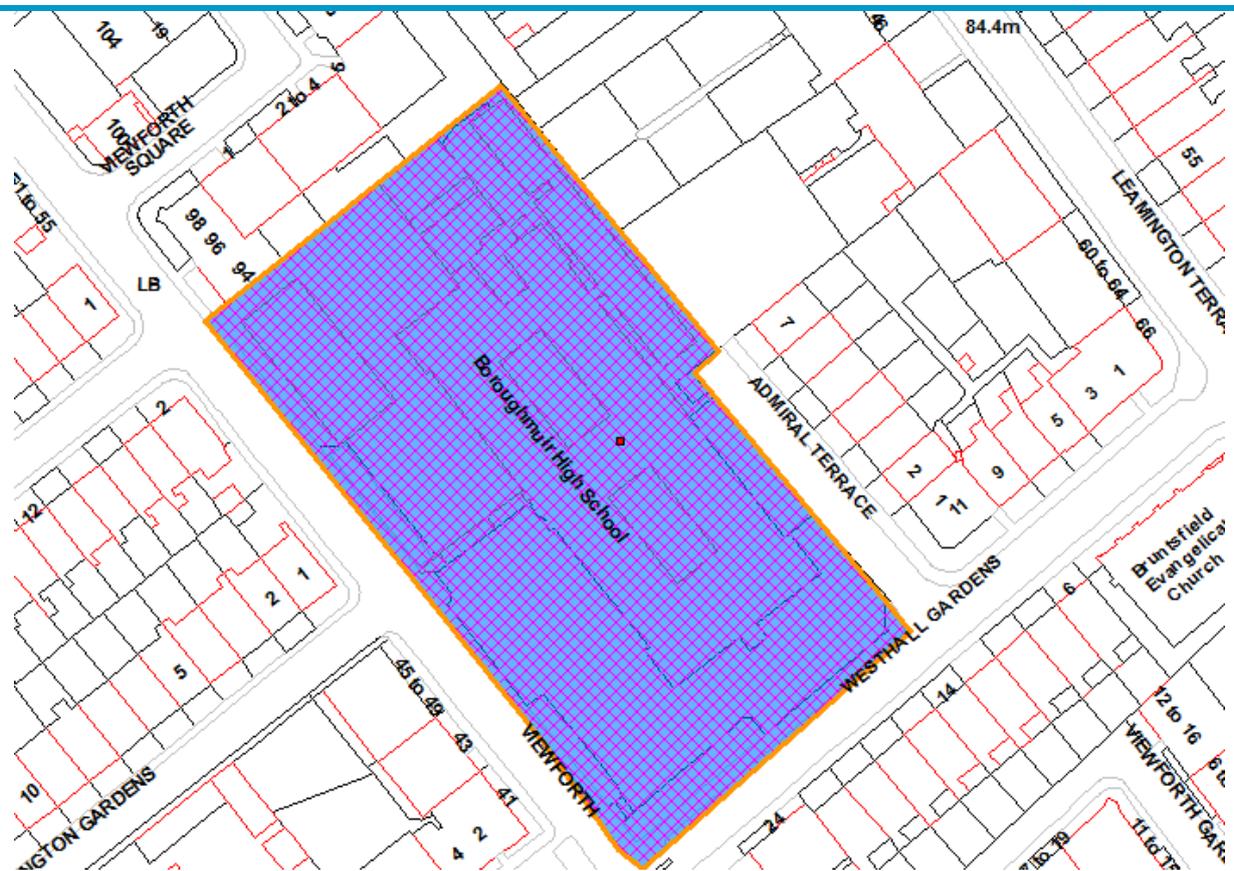
In looking at some of the alteration in more detail, we have no issue with the removal of later additions and are pleased to see retention of the main staircases internally. We also recognise that the quantity of residential units proposed is high (including the use of mezzanine floors) and will result in the alteration of classrooms and loss of the original circulation space within the building. Access to a number of the new residential units will be achieved via walkways within the two central courtyards, post removal of later infill development, and general these areas will see the more alterations in terms of new openings. Due to the secondary importance of the courtyards, we consider that it is appropriate to focus intervention in these areas.

We can see that the alterations to the highly articulate external elevations have been restricted. These generally appear on the rear of the building at ground level, required, in part, due to the removal of later additions. Due to the quality of these elevations, the addition of openings at the top of the central bay to both Viewforth and Admiral Terrace will have more of an adverse impact. This appears to have been brought forward due to the high position of the windows compared to the floor level internally. We would encourage that alternatives are investigated, i.e. can internal modification be made to the design of the flats that will avoid the need for new openings? In other schemes we have seen a raised deck in front of the windows.

Having had the opportunity to undertake a site visit, your Council will be able to undertake a more detailed assessment of the proposed alterations and assess any surviving internal features such as timber panelling and the War Memorial. We would also be happy to provide further advice on aspects of the alterations, i.e. new window openings, if this will be useful and help your Council reach a decision on the application.

Our advice can be used by you to inform your decision. The proposals do not raise issues of national significance. Our letter is advisory and is not an objection.

Location Plan



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