

Full Planning Application 04/02705/FUL
at
Corner Of George Square And Middle Meadow Walk
Edinburgh
EH8 9JZ

Development Quality Sub-Committee
of the Planning Committee

1 Purpose of report

To consider application 04/02705/FUL, submitted by University Of Edinburgh/University Court.. The application is for: **Internal refurbishment of existing building, replacement of windows, new cladding to existing stair, extensions to south and west sites, landscaping of site**

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 site comprises the University of Edinburgh Medical School building (7 storeys in height plus basement level) that forms the south west corner of the University's educational complex, located on the north side of George Square. To the north and west of the site lie the main Medical school buildings and the Hugh Robson Building. To the south lies a terraced row of two and a half storey traditional styled properties that form the western edge of George Square. These properties are also within the ownership of the applicant (University of Edinburgh). To the west is Middle Meadow Walk and beyond is the former Edinburgh Royal Infirmary that is now the "Quartermile" mixed use development site.

The application premises are not listed although they are located within the Southside Conservation Area. The properties in George Square to the south are A listed.

Site history

There is no relevant planning history for this site.

Description of the Proposal

The proposal is for the extension and refurbishment of the existing medical school building to become the new School of Social and Political Studies (SSPS). The existing main entrance, located off George Square, is to be refurbished and rationalised in order to create a new identity to assist in the new role the building will have as the School of Social and Political Studies. A new fully glazed entrance draught lobby is proposed at the south east corner whilst on the south elevation, a new visual "entrance feature", two storeys in height is propose on the south elevation. This is contemporary in design, and incorporates glazing and matt grey and metal panel cladding.

The main extensions are proposed on the west elevation which overlooks Middle Meadow Walk. This extension is three storeys in height and will accommodate seminar and plant room accommodation and a new circulation stairwell. The proposed materials include matt grey metal cladding, glazing and smooth white render. In addition, the existing stair tower is to be re-clad in matt grey metal cladding and white smooth render.

Replacement of the existing windows are proposed with aluminium clad double glazed units. Landscape proposals refer to the upgrading /provision of paved areas onto Middle Meadow Walk and within the existing courtyard.

Full details of the proposed retaining wall along the west elevation/boundary (adjacent to Middle Meadow Walk) along with a construction methodology statement, tree protection measures and new planting details have also been submitted.

3 Officer's Assessment and Recommendations

DETERMINING ISSUES

The determining issues are;

- Do the proposals preserve or enhance the character or 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 the determining issues, the Committee needs to consider whether:-

- a) The proposal is an acceptable land use
- b) The proposed alterations preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and affect the setting of the adjacent A listed buildings.
- c) The proposal will have an adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties
- d) The proposal has any implications for road safety

a) The site lies within the Mixed activities Zone as identified in the Central Edinburgh Local Plan. The building which is the subject of these proposals is part of the University of Edinburgh's Medical School Campus. The proposal will remain in university use but as a new School of Social and Political studies. Therefore, the proposals are acceptable in land use terms.

b) The character of the conservation area is summarised in the local plan as follows;- *The buildings of the South Side are predominantly tenemental, with examples of Georgian and Victorian architecture in the Scottish style. Wallhead gables once common in many Scottish cities, are a particular feature of many buildings. The development of the area started in the late eighteenth century, although several villas predate this, with the construction of George Square, laid out as a spacious speculative housing development by James Brown in 1766. The expansion of the South Side continued into the nineteenth century with the construction of late Georgian squares (such as St Patrick Square and Hill Square); subsequent development resulted in a high density mix of flats, shops, pubs, schools and churches. The University of Edinburgh occupies much of the northern part of the conservation area with several significant buildings (e.g. Medical School and McEwan Hall) as well as more recent, and less sympathetic, academic buildings*

The site at present is occupied by a relatively modern 7 storey (and basement) building (circa 1950's) that forms the south western edge of the University's Medical School Campus. Immediately adjacent is another

modern building - The Hugh Robson Building whilst to the north and south are traditional properties that are also within the University's ownership.

It is apparent that this building has long been seen as the extension to the older buildings to the north. Therefore the refurbishment proposals take this into consideration and introduce refurbishment and extension proposals which are of a contemporary design. This adds a pleasant visual interest in a manner that will enhance the existing building. The scale and proportions and the use of materials will ensure that building will have a separate identity which reflects its new status as the University's New School of Social and Political Studies.

In particular the new two storey entrance feature, facing onto George Square will, in terms of its scale and use of material, relate to the existing link bridge between the Hugh Robson Building and the application building. In doing so, it will enhance and create a unified elevation in this locality which has a mixture of traditional and modern building styles.

In respect of the west elevation, facing onto Middle Meadow Walk, this elevation is the most publicly visible. Furthermore, it lies opposite the Quatermile development site to the West. Again, the contemporary nature of the design, combined with the use of materials will enliven this elevation which will complement this particular location. It will also complement the contemporary design elements of the Quatermile development which lies opposite.

The link across from the Quatermile development to George Square results in this corner having a new prominence. Marking this in the manner proposed is, therefore, appropriate in townscape terms.

A significant part of this west elevation is broken up by glazing which will ensure that the massing is not over dominant in appearance when viewed from Middle Meadow Walk.

The use of materials is an important consideration. Local plan policy advocates the use of natural a stone for extensions to an existing building where it is located within a conservation area. However, the applicants wish to use smooth render as the proposed design is contemporary. If the use of smooth render is acceptable in principle the colour white requires further consideration, particularly in terms of its weathering characteristics. The matt grey cladding proposed on the extension and the existing stairwell is consistent with the proposed south elevation entrance proposals. Accordingly a condition requiring samples of materials to be submitted will enable the issue of weathering to be considered further.

As part of these proposals on the west elevation, a new retaining wall along the communal west boundary is proposed. Detailed consideration of the construction methodology has revealed that the works will necessitate the excavation of the adjacent grassed area on Middle Meadow Walk. This location is within the ownership of the Council and contains three mature

specimen trees and one smaller tree. At present these trees provide a high amenity value for this part of the conservation area that is characterised by an almost continuous row of trees on either side of the Middle Meadow Walk.

The excavation proposals have revealed that the viability of those trees is under threat. The applicant's survey findings indicate that two of these mature trees be removed and that they be replanted with appropriate specimen trees. The Council's Arboriculture officer is generally in agreement with these findings. The condition of these trees is poor. In addition to the two central trees of the four that will be affected, the southern smaller specimen is poor and it is recommended for removal.

In response to this issue and given the amenity contribution that the trees currently provide, the applicant has agreed to provide up to three replacement specimens. Such a requirement will ensure that following the completion of the works mature specimen trees can be replanted to ensure that the tree lined character is maintained. As these works are outwith the application site, the replanting, maintenance and tree protection works will be secured by means of a Section 75 Agreement. This approach is consistent with that taken at the Quartermile site. The applicant has agreed to this undertaking.

Historic Scotland has raised an objection to the proposed impact the development will have upon the setting of the neighbouring 'A' listed buildings in George Square and at the former Edinburgh Royal Infirmary (Quartermile). Concern has been raised in respect of the recladding of the stair well and the replacement of the windows. The proposals represent a contemporary extension that relates sympathetically to the existing building and the changing character of the surroundings. The cladding of the remainder of the stairwell represents a link/transition feature between the existing and the new elements proposed. It will not detract from the adjacent 'A' listed buildings and the Conservation area and will relate well to the fact that this corner site now has more prominence. A condition is attached requiring details of the replacement windows.

c) The scale of the extensions proposed is relatively minor in relation to the existing building. They will not exacerbate any overshadowing to neighbouring properties. In particular all neighbouring properties are within the University's ownership.

Environmental and Consumer Services have raised no objection subject to conditions requiring site investigation and which includes the design of all plant and machinery/equipment to be appropriately attenuated in respect of noise.

d) Transportation has also raised no objections.

In conclusion, the proposed use is appropriate; it will not have an adverse impact upon the character of the conservation area or residential amenity. It will also raise any road safety concerns.

It is recommended that the Committee approves this application, subject to the conditions regarding samples of materials and replacement windows, landscaping on the site, noise, site contamination and a legal agreement requiring tree protection, replacement tree planting and ground reinstatement works on the adjacent land at Middle Meadow Walk.

As Historic Scotland have objected to the impact the proposals have on the setting of adjacent A listed buildings, the application requires to be referred to the Scottish Ministers.



for **Alan Henderson**
Head of Planning and Strategy

Contact/tel	Ian Dryden on 0131 529 3464 (FAX 529 3717)
Ward affected	33 - Southside
Local Plan	Central Edinburgh
Statutory Development Plan Provision	Mixed Activity
Date registered	16 July 2004
Drawing numbers/ Scheme	S1:01-27; S2:01-31 Scheme 2

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.

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.

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 or sarah.bogunovic@edinburgh.gov.uk

Application Type Full Planning Application
Application Address: Corner Of George Square And Middle Meadow Walk
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Proposal: Internal refurbishment of existing building, replacement of windows, new cladding to existing stair, extensions to south and west sites, landscaping of site
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Consultations, Representations and Planning Policy

Consultations

Transportation

I have no objections to the application.

Environmental and Consumer Services

This department has no objections to this proposed development subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the commencement of construction works on site:

(a) A site survey (including intrusive investigation where necessary) must be carried out to establish to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning , either that the level of risk posed to human health and the wider environment by contaminants in, on or under the land is acceptable, or that remedial and/or protective measures could be undertaken to bring the risks to an acceptable level in relation to the development; and

(b) Where necessary, a detailed schedule of any remedial and /or protective measures, including their programming, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning.

Any required remedial and/or protective measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved schedule and documentary evidence to certify those works shall be provided to the satisfaction of the head of Planning.

The design and installation of any plant, machinery or equipment shall be such that any associated noise complies, with NR25 when measured within any nearby living apartment.

Parks and Sport

If planning permission is granted for the extension, it will directly impact upon the Middle Meadow Walk and the number of pedestrians using this route will greatly increase. I would suggest, therefore, that a condition of planning permission being granted therefore, is that the developer should make a contribution to the overall improvement works planned for the East Meadows.

Historic Scotland

With regard to our recent GDPO consultation, Historic Scotland have been evaluating the Edinburgh University campus buildings and this particular building, erected as an expansion of the Medical School from 1955 onwards and designed Walter Ramsay Architects with Basil Spence as design consultant, is one that has been identified as being of interest and is currently being considered for listing.

With this in mind Historic Scotland do not oppose the insertion of a new entrance feature to the former Pathology building as the existing structure seems to be being retained with the new entrance effectively plugged on but not dominating the elevation. The extensions to the side also seem to be reasonable contemporary additions which do not detract from the overall qualities of the existing building or impact on its "A" listed neighbours, subject to the colour of the render being in harmony with its neighbours.

Historic Scotland are concerned however about the adverse impact the proposed cladding of the stair tower will have on the character of the existing building, the "A" listed buildings and the surrounding Conservation Area. While we would usually value good modern design solutions, the proposed cladding seems unnecessary in this instance. The material is alien in terms of colour and texture within the immediate and wider sandstone context and will result in this element becoming particularly obvious and over dominant. The stair tower should be left as existing. The removal of the existing windows from the stair tower should also be questioned. All original windows should be retained, repaired and overhauled as required in line with usual Conservation Area guidance.

Representations

One letter of representation has been received from Councillor Robert Cairns, objecting to the proposal in terms of the inappropriate design and materials.

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.

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.

Policy CD10 (NEW DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVE) encourages new development of the highest possible architectural and urban quality.

Policy CD11 (NEW DEVELOPMENT - GENERAL) sets out general design requirements for new development, and requires particular attention to be paid to main approach roads to the city centre.

Policy CD15 (INFILL DEVELOPMENT) sets out design requirements for new infill development.

Policy CD17 (MATERIALS) sets out requirements for materials in new developments and seeks a greater use of stone, roofing slate and other traditional materials in appropriate cases.

Policy CD18 (SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY) requires the design and layout of development proposals to meet safety, sustainability and accessibility objectives.

Policy CD19 (BUILDING ALTERATIONS) sets out requirements for the design, form, materials and positioning of alterations and extensions.

Policy GE1 (OPEN SPACE PROTECTION) requires that the protection of the landscape quality and townscape quality of open spaces defined on the Proposals Map is an overriding consideration when development is proposed in Central Edinburgh.

Policy GE2 (OPEN SPACE PROTECTION) resists development proposals which would result in the loss of any open space which contributes to environmental character and amenity is of recreational or other social value.

Policy GE10 (TREE PLANTING) encourages tree planting by both the public and private sector.

Policy GE11 (Tree Protection) sets out tree protection requirements for new development.

Policy CS2 (COMMUNITY SERVICES - LOCAL NEED) supports, and sets out criteria for assessing, the provision or improvement of community services required to meet the needs of the resident population.

Non-statutory guidelines on 'COLOUR OF BUILDINGS' provide guidance on this matter, in support of local plan conservation and design policies.

Non-statutory guidelines 'DAYLIGHTING, PRIVACY AND SUNLIGHT' set criteria for assessing proposals in relation to these issues.

Non-statutory guidelines on 'TREE PROTECTION' supplement local plan green environment policies, and support the retention of healthy trees of landscape or amenity significance, encourage new tree planting wherever appropriate within new development and promote a substantial renewal of the city's woodland resource.

The South Side Conservation Area Character Appraisal emphasises the harmonious scale, massing and materials and the significance of key institutional buildings within the area.

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Conditions/Reasons associated with the Recommendation

Recommendation

It is recommended that this application be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions below.

Conditions

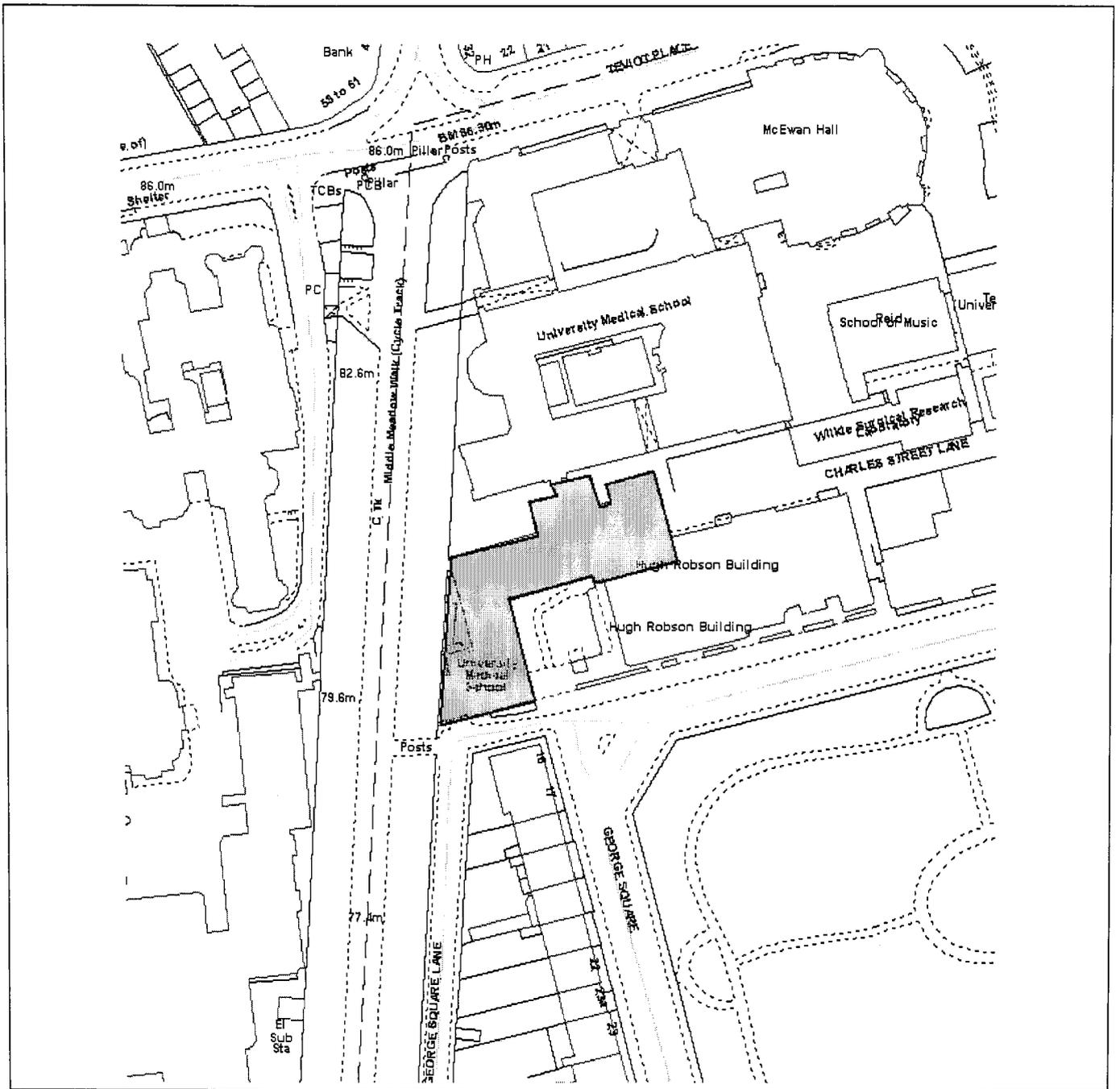
1. The application shall be referred to the Scottish Ministers prior to determination.
2. Prior to the issue of this permission the applicant shall enter into an agreement under the terms of Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for the protection/ replacement of trees and ground reinstatement works on land adjacent to the site in Middle Meadow Walk. Replacement trees shall be suitably mature specimens.
3. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than five years from the date of this consent.
4. Sample/s of the proposed smooth cement render colour shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning & Strategy before work commences on site.
5. i) Prior to the commencement of construction works on site:
 - a) A site survey (including intrusive investigation where necessary) must be carried out to establish to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning and Strategy, either that the level of risk posed to human health and the wider environment by contaminants in, on or under the land is acceptable, or that remedial and/or protective measures could be undertaken to bring the risks to an acceptable level in relation to the development; and

- b) Where necessary, a detailed schedule of any required remedial and /or protective measures, including their programming, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning and Strategy.
- ii) Any required remedial and/or protective measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved schedule and documentary evidence to certify those works shall be provided to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning and Strategy.
6. The design and installation of any plant, machinery or equipment shall be such that any associated noise complies with NR25 when measured within any nearby living apartment, and no structure borne vibration is perceptible within any nearby living apartment.
7. Sample/s of the proposed replacement windows shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning & Strategy before work commences on site.

Reasons

1. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.
2. In order to ensure that a high standard of landscaping is required and to safeguard protected trees.
3. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.
4. In order to enable the planning authority to consider this/these matter/s in detail.
5. In order to ensure that the site is suitable for redevelopment, given the nature of previous uses/processes on the site.
6. In order to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring residents and other occupiers.
7. In order to enable the planning authority to consider this/these matter/s in detail.

End



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PLANNING APPLICATION

Address	Corner Of George Square And Middle Meadow Walk,		
Proposal	Internal refurbishment of existing building, replacement of windows, new cladding to existing stair, extensions to south		
Application number:	04/02705/FUL	WARD	33- Southside
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL			
THE CITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT- PLANNING & STRATEGY			