

Directorate for Local Government and Communities

Planning and Architecture Division (PAD)

Planner Assessment Report



Case reference	CAC-GLW-002
Application details	Complete demolition in a Conservation Area - 16/02418/DC
Site address	8 Dixon Street, Glasgow (advertised as 8 but also includes demolition of 2-6 Dixon Street)
Applicant	Clyde Dixon Land & Property Ltd
Determining Authority Local Authority Area	Glasgow City Council
Reason(s) for notification	<i>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)(Notification of Applications) Direction 2015</i> - where Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has advised against the granting of conservation area consent and the local authority are minded to grant, the application must be notified to Ministers.
Heritage Designations	Demolition of unlisted building in Glasgow Central Conservation Area
Representations	1 objection
Date notified to Ministers Date of recommendation	6 April 2017 12 June 2017
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Conservation Area Consent (CAC) is sought for the demolition of a group of 3 storey sandstone buildings, dating from 1825, which contain a mix of retail and commercial units, at 2-8 Dixon Street, Glasgow. The buildings form a corner block with the main frontage to Dixon Street and an elevation fronting the River Clyde on Clyde Street and one fronting Fox Street. A related Planning Permission has also been notified to Ministers (16/02417/DC) which is for the erection of a 17

storey mixed use development comprising hotel with 2 commercial units on ground floor to replace the existing buildings.

Consultations and Representations:

- One objection from HES – no other representations received for the CAC application. (12 representations [of which 11 are objections] were received for the related Planning Permission raising issues such as the loss of the existing buildings, overshadowing of nearby buildings, height and design of the proposed hotel out of keeping with surrounding area, adversely affects the setting of various listed buildings, alternative brownfield sites are available, proposed development does not take account of major regeneration initiatives, levels of pre-application consultation was not sufficient.)
- One letter of support considered the new building would be beneficial to the local area, act as an anchorage point/gateway to the Clyde from Buchanan Street and generate much required activity and enhanced public realm.

Assessment:

1. The application has been notified because HES have advised against the granting of CAC. It is their view that the historic buildings make a strong and positive contribution to the character of Glasgow Central Conservation Area. They believe the range of options for their refurbishment and continued use have not been tested in line with national policy, meaning that options have not been fully explored.
2. HES consider the historic buildings to be in a fair condition, partially in use with no evidence of serious deterioration which would make their repair economically unviable. They accept that the buildings have been altered and are in need of maintenance and stone repair but enough of the original fabric survives to allow the original arrangement, and its contribution to the city's early 19th century character, to be understood. The two buildings built as a pair with matching architectural detailing are good examples of the type of restrained classical houses that were standard in Glasgow from the late 18th century to the 1850s.
3. The Council's view is that the buildings are of little townscape value, having been altered to incorporate a single storey section on Clyde Street and that at ground floor the appearance of the frontage contributes little to the streetscape. They consider it acceptable to demolish and replace with a building that better activates the street. They also consider the proposals to be in accordance with their development plan policies with no material considerations to outweigh accordance with the development plan.
4. HES raise issues with the lack of satisfactory sound evidence regarding use, condition and viability as required by national policy, some of which has not been

provided to justify the CAC. The Council and the applicants have focused on the urban realm and regeneration aspects of the replacement proposal with less emphasis given to the impact of the loss of historic buildings, especially on the river frontage, and the townscape, contextual and visual impacts of the replacement scheme on the conservation area. Based on the information before us and the Council's assessment, there appears to be a case to call-in the CAC for further scrutiny. However, there two additional factors to bring into consideration:

i) a previous scheme to demolish the 2-8 Dixon Street buildings and erect residential flats was considered by the Council in 2005. CAC was granted with conditions for the demolition of the Dixon Street buildings on 18 October 2005.

While Historic Scotland did raise concerns with this proposal and how it responded to its context and the effect on Clyde Street, adjacent listed buildings, the city skyline and Buchanan Street, they did not recommend calling-in the CAC application, and cleared it back to the Council to determine. This CAC permission has now lapsed hence this new application.

The Council was minded to grant the related planning permission for a 15 storey tower subject to the conclusion of a Section 69 legal agreement in 2005. This agreement was never concluded and the planning permission application was withdrawn. Therefore no live consent ever existed for the site's redevelopment. The 15 storey tower was reduced to 9 stories when facing the riverside to respect the context.

ii) the immediate area surrounding Dixon Street is suffering from a number of listed buildings at risk and gap sites where historic buildings have been demolished and significantly taller redevelopment schemes have been consented but not been built. This has left an impression of historic fabric which is suffering from a lack of maintenance and decay and requires a significant amount of investment. The Dixon Street corners facing on to the River Clyde still retain an impressive grouping of historic buildings with an important symmetrical townscape relationship between the two blocks which will be lost and significantly altered by the replacement scheme. However, the Council considers 2-8 Dixon Street redevelopment to be a catalyst for regeneration which will hopefully encourage the gap sites to be filled.

5. The buildings do have a particularly important townscape relationship with the remaining Dixon Street buildings, Clyde Street, the River Clyde and the grand Georgian terrace of Carlton Place on the opposite side of the river. HES have highlighted that the range of options for retention and integration in a redevelopment were not adequately explored. There is also an argument for seeking to encourage the development of the existing gap sites and facilitating consented schemes rather than seeking the demolition of another historic building which is in use and in a reasonable condition and contributes to the character of the conservation area. (See Annex 1).

6. However, the buildings have previously been agreed for demolition and the immediate area is in need of substantial investment and regeneration. While there is no doubt the retention and refurbishment of the historic buildings would be preferable, the principle of their demolition and redevelopment has previously been accepted. The Council have actively encouraged the introduction of a vista stopper to Buchanan Street and there is significant emerging change in the urban context.
7. The conservation argument in this particular case is very finely balanced. On balance, although HES has objected, given the previous planning history of granting consent, it is not considered that the application raises national issues that warrant Ministerial intervention.

Decision/Recommendation:

- Clear the application back to Glasgow City Council to determine.

