

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Housing & Regeneration Committee

approval noting

Ref PH/TM

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Kildonan Street Offices, Coatbridge

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Executive Summary

Following the decision to close the Municipal Buildings on Kildonan Street as part of the council's larger office rationalisation programme, migration of the 400 staff has already started, and will continue over the next 18-24 months. In order to ensure the building has a productive future use, the council appointed Conservation Architectural Consultants to develop the most practical and cost effective design solutions and layouts for the conversion of this Grade B listed building to residential use.

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to include Kildonan Street within the new supply programme and to progress more detailed design development work including further consultation with Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee;

- 1) Note the outcome of the Feasibility Study and the estimated costs associated with conversion of Kildonan Street to residential accommodation.
- 2) Note that Counsel Opinion has been obtained on the title position which has confirmed the site is common good. Further opinions will be obtained on the process for changing the use of the site.
- 3) Approve the inclusion of the former Municipal Buildings within the new supply programme subject to the finalisation of detailed designs and costs, obtaining statutory consents and completing any other due diligence involved in converting the building to residential use.
- 4) Approve the commencement of procurement activity to appoint a suitably qualified design team with experience of working with listed buildings led by a conservation architect to progress the project to the detailed design stage with an option to appoint them for the construction phase.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve economic opportunities and outcomes

Ambition statement (1) Ensure a housing mix that supports social inclusion and economic growth

1. Background

- 1.1 The decision has been taken to close the municipal buildings on Kildonan Street as part of the council's larger office rationalisation programme. Migration of the 400 staff has already started, and will continue over the next 18-24 months. In order to ensure the building has a productive future use, the council appointed Austin Smith Lord as Conservation Architectural Consultants to develop the most practical and cost effective design solutions and layouts for the conversion of this Grade B listed building to residential use.

2. Report

- 2.1 The Consultants were appointed in March 2019 and engaged with relevant council services, including Planning and Building Standards, to progress the feasibility study and evaluation of different options. Consultation also took place with Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Appendix 1 summarises the Consultants' key findings for the options appraisal. A clear preferred option emerged, which was progressed to RIBA Stage 2 and costed, in line with NLC's Scope and as outlined below.

PREFERRED OPTION - OPTION 5C



2.2 Final Proposals

- 2.2.1 Main Wing on Dunbeth Street - Due to the historic importance of its interior, it is proposed that this remains largely as is internally, converting existing spaces into rooms with a residential function with the exception of the link corridor extension which will be demolished. It is proposed within the Austin Smith Lord report that the existing former council chambers and conference room will have a standalone pod in the centre of the room that stays clear of the all decorative elements on the walls and the ceiling. The pod would incorporate bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen. However, it is proposed that further options should be considered to make better use of space in these two rooms.

In order to minimise intervention to the building fabric, the Main Wing is not DDA compliant and utilises the existing stair core on Dunbeth Road for circulation.

- 2.2.2 Former Police Wing on Muirhall Street - It is proposed within the feasibility report that the elevation on Muirhall Street and the east facing wall are retained along with the landmark chimney currently rising above the wing, and a new structure built behind which will create DDA compliant dual aspect two-bedroom flats with a new stair core and a new roof above. However, due to the high costs involved in conversion of this wing it is proposed that further discussion should take place with HES regarding the viability of retaining this part of the building.
- 2.2.3 Newer Wing on Kildonan Street - A full refurbishment of the Modern Extension retaining the existing circulation core can provide more DDA compliant single aspect two-bedroom flats. The existing core also provides level access to the flats on the north-west corner of the building.
- 2.2.4 New Build - 10no 3 storey townhouses are proposed along the Eastern boundary. These are four bedroomed properties, although final mix can be changed as required, each with a small courtyard garden and nearby on-street parking. These homes would look onto the grassed embankment of the adjacent high school.
- 2.2.5 Courtyard Elevations - As a means of returning the building to a version closer to its original form, but also to ensure more natural light for the interior, it is proposed that the various extensions located at the courtyard are removed.
- 2.2.6 Courtyard - Given the town centre location, the nearby public transport and existing public car park on Dunbeth Street, the reduced parking option was preferred which also allows some communal amenity space for the development at basement level.
- 2.2.7 Mechanical and Electrical - All existing mechanical and electrical fittings will be stripped out and replaced. A communal heating system is proposed, with individual meters to each property. Properties would be naturally ventilated wherever possible and a new sprinkler / fire suppression system installed.

2.3 **Estimated Costs**

- 2.3.1 As is generally the case with the conversion of listed buildings, the estimated cost of the conversion and new build to create 49 homes is £11m, including a contingency allowance. The cost of converting the Muirhall Street wing is particularly expensive at £0.3m per unit, and it is proposed that further options should be explored with HES to seek to reduce these costs within the project.

2.4 **Next Steps**

- 2.4.1 Should the recommendations in this report be approved, it is proposed to carry out a competitive procurement exercise to appoint a suitably qualified design team with experience of working with listed buildings led by a conservation architect to progress the project to the detailed design stage with an option to appoint them to manage the construction phase. They will be required to progress detailed designs including revised options for the former council chamber and committee room as well as the Muirhall Street wing, to create the most viable scheme.
- 2.5 It is also proposed to explore the potential to develop the residential units for mid market rent. This is in line with the commitment in both the Local Housing Strategy and the Economic Regeneration Delivery Plan to explore new models for developing intermediate tenure options to meet a wider range of housing needs. Town centre

accommodation is particularly suited for the Mid Market Rent model. However, if this is not feasible, the homes would be developed for social rent.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

This proposal has the potential to deliver more affordable homes which will reduce inequalities of income caused by socio-economic disadvantage

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the office rationalisation programme and has been completed for the New Supply Programme.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

The costs of the works related to this project are outlined in section 2.3 and would be met from the HRA New Supply Programme budget and potentially a contribution from the composite capital programme budget for Town Centre Regeneration. The possibility of a higher grant contribution from the Scottish Government will also be explored. Due to the costs involved in the conversion of the building, there will be no capital receipt payable by HRA to General Services.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

Counsel Opinion has been obtained on the title position which has confirmed the site is common good. Further opinions will be obtained on the process for changing the use of the site.

4.3 Environmental Impact

The conversion of the building for residential use is more sustainable than demolition and new build. Any future works contract will ensure that the impact on the Council's carbon footprint is mitigated.

4.4 Risk Impact

There are a number of risks associated with the refurbishment and conversion of old buildings, particularly those that are listed.

Any costs incurred in advancing the design / feasibility study could prove abortive if the title issues cannot be resolved.

If the project progresses beyond this initial feasibility, a detailed risk register will be developed for this project.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 The measure of success will be the successful re-purposing of the existing Grade B listed building which is an important part of the heritage of Coatbridge to provide affordable housing and help meet housing need.
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6. Supporting documents

Appendix 1 Report Findings

Full feasibility report available on request



Pamela Humphries
Head of Planning and Regeneration

Appendix 1 Report Findings

Architectural

- Stonework is generally in good condition
- Full strip of the slate roof with full salvage and re-use of the slates together with full replacement of all leadwork is recommended.
- The two most significant historical spaces within the building are the main Conference Room and the Cafe Dining Room (former Council Chambers).
- The former jail cells are also of interest, but may be too awkward to incorporate in a residential use.
- Window replacement required throughout – aluminium / timber composite frame is recommended.
- Large octagonal chimney in the former Police Wing on Muiryhall Street is a key architectural landmark in the townscape.

Structural

- Structural condition of the building is generally considered acceptable, it is well maintained and there are no obvious structural reasons that would prohibit the conversion to residential accommodation.
- There has been past water ingress at roof level which appear to have been dealt with at the time and there is no suggestion of ongoing rot or timber decay as a result.
- All internal walls in the original stone building are brick, very robust and show no signs of movement. It was determined all walls are loadbearing.
- The newer wing on Kildonan Street is open plan with concrete floors and could be converted to residential accommodation relatively easily.
- The former police station wing appeared to be in poorer condition compared with the other wings due to a higher level of past alteration and differences in floor level requiring steps between different areas of the building. The floors in this block also appeared to be deflecting more than in other blocks due to the replacement of loadbearing walls below with slapping beams.
- New foundations would be formed on the boulder clay approximately 4m below ground level, suggesting mini-piles or possibly vibro-compacted stone columns. Deeper piles would be required if mines are found, and this would be confirmed by site investigation.

Mechanical and Electrical

- Existing building services are all in working order, however everything is at the end of its service life and is due for replacement.
- It is recommended that all services are stripped back to the meters as reconfiguring the existing mechanical and electrical services within the building would be cost negative.
- The building is not very energy efficient as it is, but a much more efficient system could be designed.
- Traditional gas combi boilers may not be a good solution for this project due to the number of flue penetrations and overflow pipes that would penetrate the building fabric. A communal gas fired heating system is therefore preferred. Individual properties would be metered.
- Natural ventilation within the deep plan will not always be possible, whole flat ventilation may be required. Duct routes could be difficult in some parts of the building.
- There is a good drainage network within the building but not adequate for 70+ WCs and showers. Routing the drainage pipework within the building will require careful thought.
- The incoming water main is suitably sized for a residential development

- The two current plant rooms can be reused for distribution of services - most services come into the building in these locations.