

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Planning Committee

approval noting

Ref

Date 25/02/21

Listing of Civic Centre, Motherwell by Historic Environment Scotland

From Head of Planning and Regeneration

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update members regarding the decision by Historic Environment Scotland to designate the Motherwell Civic Centre including Civic Theatre, at Windmillhill Street and Airbles Road, Motherwell as a Category B Listed Building. The protected status of the structure came into effect from 2nd December 2020 under Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997

Recommendations

It is recommended that members note the decision by Historic Environment Scotland to designate the Motherwell Civic Centre including Civic Theatre, at Windmillhill Street and Airbles Road, Motherwell as a Category B Listed Building.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve economic opportunities and outcomes

Ambition statement (4) Market and promote North Lanarkshire as the place to live, learn, work, invest, and visit

1. Background

- 1.1 A proposal to designate Motherwell Civic Centre was received by Historic Environment Scotland in early 2019. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) carried out the required site visit and consultation process culminating in the structure being designated with B Listed status on the 2nd December 2020.
- 1.2 The council responded to the consultation to object to the proposed listing however this was unsuccessful.

2. Report

- 2.1 The 'B' listed designation offers the structure protected status in that it cannot be altered or demolished without obtaining the required Listed Building Consents. The category B listing recognises the design, relative rarity of the structure as a major examples of post-war Modernist architectural design and its cultural contribution.

- 2.2 The structure is described as Motherwell Civic Centre complex, comprising Municipal Offices including 6-storey office block and adjoining ranges (excluding interiors), projecting circular council chamber (including interior and excluding glazed stair tower addition), Motherwell Concert Hall and Civic Theatre to west (including interiors and excluding lift shafts, metal fire-escape stair to southwest and service addition to hall roof), Civic Square office block to north (including 5-storey office block with dual-level shop units and excluding interiors), associated hard landscaping including plazas, decks, walkways and sunken garden, and free-standing clock tower to east at corner of Windmillhill Street and Airbles Road, Motherwell.
- 2.3 Some aspects and areas of Motherwell Civic Centre are excluded from the listing: Interiors of the 6-storey office block, interiors of the adjoining ranges and interiors of Civic Square, the glazed stair tower addition to the council chamber and the lift shafts, metal fire-escapes and service addition to the fly tower of the Concert Hall and Civic Theatre.
- 2.4 Motherwell Civic Centre complex is an extensive group of interconnected Modernist public buildings near the centre of Motherwell. It was designed 1961-63 by Peter L. A. Williams of Wylie, Shanks and Partners for the Burgh of Motherwell and Wishaw Town Council, and built 1964-69 by Whatlings (Buildings) Ltd contractors.
- 2.5 The following extracts from the listing description explain the reasons for listing the structure:

Statement of Special Interest

Motherwell Civic Centre meets the criteria of special architectural or historic interest for the following reasons:

- As a major example of Modernist civic architecture of the post-war period in Scotland which survives largely unaltered.
- For its exceptional design and carefully considered plan-form with bespoke finishes and close attention to detail, by an important Scottish architect and proponent of Modernist architecture in Scotland.
- As a key landmark civic building in Motherwell.
- For its cultural contribution to our understanding of civic life, society and local governance in Scotland in the 20th century.

Architectural interest

Design

Motherwell Civic Centre is a major example of post-war Modernist architectural design in Scotland incorporating many of the movement's fundamental design principles.

The plan form of Motherwell Civic Centre is of special architectural interest, reflecting many key Modernist design principles. Attention is given to the space between the various components and the way the buildings and spaces relate and interact with each other across the multi-level site. The prominent placing of the Council debating chamber near the roadside signifies its functional importance.

The Modern Movement emerged in the earlier twentieth century in Europe when prominent figures – including key theorists and figureheads such as architects Le Corbusier - established their reputations. As an ideological movement (rather than the visual ‘style’) the architects of the Modern Movement sought to bring about positive societal and cultural change through regulated, design-led town planning and public building schemes.

The design for the new civic centre was chosen by means of a nationwide two-stage competition, among the first competition on this scale in Scotland. The winning architects Wylie Shanks and Wylie (later partners) also won a Civic Trust Award for the Motherwell and Wishaw Civic Centre in 1973.

Setting

Motherwell Civic Centre is one of the town’s most prominent architectural landmarks, occupying a large area of high ground at Windmillhill Street in the centre of the town. The contrast of long, low buildings punctuated by higher blocks, and incorporating areas of hard landscaping and public space, adds to its overall prominence.

The spatial organisation of the various components as a group of functionally, physically and stylistically related modern public buildings is part of its setting. The complex is designed to be viewed in the round, with architectural interest evident at every elevation.

The setting together with the surrounding urban fabric contributes to our understanding of the historic function of the Civic Centre as an ambitious post-war building of local administration and public service at the heart of Motherwell.

Historic interest

Age and rarity

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1947 divided local government structure into centralised county and burgh administrative areas. Each local authority created new administrative centres in the 1960s and 70s and these types of developments are common to every large urban centre in Scotland.

Many major civic centres and government administration buildings built between 1948 and 1980 have been demolished in recent years as Scottish local authorities adopt decentralised and geographically dispersed models of local governance.

Motherwell Civic Centre is distinguished as a major purpose-built example of civic architecture in Scotland, strongly influenced by key design principles of the European Modern Movement. It is one of a very small number of major civic commissions of architectural distinction in Scotland which survive largely intact.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

The listing of this structure does not affect this duty

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

The listing of the structure may have an impact in terms of ongoing costs to maintain the special character of the building.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

The listing of the structure means that it is protected and that other than repairs any works to alter or remove the structure would require Listed Building Consent.

4.3 Environmental Impact

Not applicable

4.4 Risk Impact

There is no risk foreseen as the Listing does not remove the responsibility or “duty of care” from the Council as owner of the structure to ensure that it does not become a danger to the public.

5. Measures of success

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Supporting documents

6.1 Appendix 1 – Location Plan

6.2 Letter from Historic Environment Scotland dated 03.12.20 – copy available on request



Pamela Humphries
Head of Planning and Regeneration

Appendix 1

Location Plan

This map is for quick reference purposes to aid identification of the building only and it may not be to scale. The local authority is responsible for advising on what is covered by the listing including the curtilage of a listed building. Legislation introduced from 01 October 2015 allows us to state that part of a building and/or curtilage item is excluded from the listing. For more information see www.historicenvironment.scot.



Designation Reference: LB52545
 Motherwell Civic Centre complex, comprising Municipal Offices including 6-storey office block and adjoining ranges (excluding interiors), projecting circular council chamber (including interior and excluding glazed stair tower addition), Motherwell Concert Hall and Civic Theatre to west (including interiors and excluding lift shafts, metal fire-escape stair to southwest and service addition to hall roof), Civic Square office block to north (including 5-storey office block with dual-level shop units and excluding interiors), associated hard landscaping including plazas, decks, walkways and sunken garden, and free-standing clock tower to east at corner of Windmillhill Street and Airbles Road, Motherwell

Local Authority: North Lanarkshire
Listed Building

0 10 20 30 40 50
 Scale: 1:1,250 m

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