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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>The Planning Board</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>5 December 2012</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Regeneration and Planning</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>12/0289/IC Plan12/12</b>
			<b>Local Application Development</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>James McColl</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712462</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Change of use to form new library at 7 Wallace Place, Greenock</b>		

## SITE DESCRIPTION

This building, in Wallace Place, Greenock was previously used as the Council's Customer Service Centre. Constructed in sandstone with a grey slate roof, the building is over four floors (including basement) and is currently utilised as Council office accommodation. The Municipal Buildings and the Oak Mall Shopping Centre lie adjacent.



## PROPOSAL

It is proposed to change the use of the building to accommodate a public library at ground floor level with associated storage at basement level. This will allow the Greenock Central Library to move from its temporary accommodation on Cathcart Street to a permanent location. The upper floors of the building will remain in office use.

The exterior of the building will be refurbished together with the provision of a replacement slate roof, removal of four rooflights and the alteration and replacement of a further two rooflights.

## LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

### Local Plan Policy R1- Designated Centres

The following Centres are designated:

#### 1. Town Centres, as defined on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Greenock, subdivided into a 'Central Shopping Area' and 'Outer Mixed/Commercial Area';
- (b) Port Glasgow
- (c) Gourock; and

#### 2. Local Centres, as defined or indicated on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Kilmacolm (defined);
- (b) Dubbs Road, Port Glasgow (defined);
- (c) Sinclair Street, Greenock;
- (d) Belville Street, Greenock;
- (e) Lynedoch Street, Greenock;
- (f) Barrs Cottage (Inverkip Road/Dunlop Street), Greenock;
- (g) Ravenscraig (Cumberland Walk), Greenock;
- (h) Cardwell Road, Gourock (defined);
- (i) Main Street, Inverkip;
- (j) Ardgowan Road, Wemyss Bay;
- (k) By Station/Pier, Wemyss Bay.

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to assist urban regeneration and sustainable travel patterns. This will be achieved by encouraging each Centre to serve its own retail and service catchments without detriment to other Centres and to the overall roles of Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock as the principal Centres serving the Authority.

### Local Plan Policy R2 - Support for Designated Centres

The designated Centres identified in Policy R1 will be protected, enhanced and developed, where resources allow, through a range of initiatives aimed at achieving the following:

- (a) encouraging a diversity of retail, leisure, civic, public administration, office, residential and other uses, of the type which the Council, as Planning Authority, considers to be appropriate to the development of the individual Centres, in order to support their vitality and viability, particularly through mixed use developments and through the use of upper floors of commercial premises;
- (b) identifying and promoting opportunities for new development and for the redevelopment and reuse of existing premises, both within and on the edge of the defined Centres;
- (c) improving the quality of the urban environment through implementing programmes for the improvement of individual properties, the streetscape and open spaces;
- (d) improving accessibility and integration of services by bus, train, ferry and taxi;
- (e) improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists through the provision of safe and convenient facilities and routes both into and within the town centres;
- (f) managing provision of freight access and of car, motorcycle and cycle parking for residents, visitors, workers and shoppers in accordance with an approved strategy;
- (g) managing traffic flows to minimise congestion and pollution and to give priority to the disabled, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and service vehicles; and

- (h) developing Town Centre Action Plans in partnership with other agencies.

#### Local Plan Policy R3 - Town Centre Uses

The following town centre uses will be directed towards the Central Shopping Area of Greenock, the other two Town Centres (Port Glasgow and Gourock) and the Local Centres:

- (a) Use Class 1 (Shops);
- (b) Use Class 2 (Financial, Professional and other Services);
- (c) Use Class 3 (Food and Drink);
- (d) Use Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure); and
- (e) Related uses such as public houses, hot food take-aways, theatres, amusement arcades and offices for taxis for public hire.

Outside these designated Centres, the above uses will be permitted in principle in the Outer Mixed/Commercial Area around the Central Shopping Area of Greenock Town Centre, according to the specification in Policy R5. Applications for any of the uses listed will be considered subject to the criteria outlined in Policy R10. Proposals for other uses in designated Centres will be considered on their merit.

#### Local Plan Policy R10 - Assessing Development Proposals for Town Centre Uses

Any proposal for a development of one or more of the town centre uses identified in Policy R3, or for any other commercial use within a defined centre, will be required to satisfy the criteria listed below:

- (a) for developments on the edge of, or outside, the designated Centres, and retail developments on the edge of, or outside, Greenock's Central Shopping Area, the applicant should have adopted a sequential approach to site selection, including consideration of sites identified under Policy R6;
- (b) the applicant having demonstrated that there is a capacity for the development in terms of expenditure compared to turnover in the appropriate catchment area, or a qualitative deficiency in existing provision;
- (c) the proposal should not have a detrimental effect, including cumulatively, on the vitality and viability of existing Centres;
- (d) the size and format of the development is appropriate to the Centre for which it is proposed;
- (e) the proposed development should be accessible by a choice of means of transport from its forecast catchment, make provision for improved infrastructure where deemed necessary, not result in unacceptable changes in travel patterns and, where required, be supported by the production of a Transport Assessment;
- (f) the proposed development should be to a high standard of design and its scale, siting and relationship to the surrounding townscape and land uses should make a positive contribution to the quality of the urban environment;
- (g) the proposal should not have a detrimental effect on residential amenity or on the amenity and effective operation of existing businesses;
- (h) the proposal should be consistent with other relevant national, Structure Plan and Local Plan policies and guidelines, including any Town Centre Strategy or other relevant initiative which may have been instigated, the Council's Roads Development Guide, 1995 and any other standards; and

- (i) in Greenock Town Centre the proposed development should be consistent with Policies R4 and R5.

Where the proposal includes either a convenience retail development of over 1,000 square metres gross; comparison retail development of over 2,000 square metres gross; or Use Class 11 (Assembly & Leisure) developments that will attract a large number of users, it should be accompanied by a statement of justification addressing the above criteria and the criteria set out in the Structure Plan and NPPG8. At the Council's discretion, applications for development within designated Centres or small-scale development of town centre uses outwith the designated Centres may be exempted from the requirement to be justified against criteria (a)-(d).

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Head of Environmental and Commercial Services** – The site is located in a town centre location where surrounding roads have waiting and loading restrictions to prevent obstructive parking. There is on street parking adjacent to the development and off street parking in close proximity at the Bullring and Cathcart Street Car Parks. Consequently the lack of dedicated off street parking for the development is accepted in this case.

**Transport Scotland** – No objections.

## **PUBLICITY**

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 28th September 2012 as there are no premises on neighbouring land.

## **SITE NOTICES**

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The application was subject of neighbour notification and a press advertisement. No representations were received.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The material considerations in the determination of this application are the Local Plan, the consultation responses and the visual impact of the proposed external alterations.



The site is located within the central shopping area of Greenock Town Centre, as defined by the Local Plan. Whilst Class 10 Uses such as a public library are not specifically directed to this location by Policy R3, the policy supports the introduction of uses related to the shopping function of the town centre. I consider a public library is an appropriate use which will help support the central shopping area of the Town Centre. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal presents no conflict with Policies R1, R2 and R3. With respect to the relevant criteria in Policy R10, the proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of the town centre; the size and format of this development is appropriate to a town centre and that it will not have a detrimental effect on residential amenity.

With regard to traffic and parking, there is no opportunity for the provision of off street parking. However, I am minded that this property is within the town centre, accessible by a range of means of transport. Additionally, the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services notes that sufficient waiting and loading restrictions exist on surrounding streets to control obstructive parking. There is on street parking adjacent to the development and off street parking in close proximity at the Bullring and Cathcart Street Car Parks. Consequently he advises that the lack of dedicated off street parking for the development is accepted in this case. I consider that it would therefore be inappropriate to refuse planning permission on the grounds that dedicated off street parking is not to be provided. Transport Scotland offer no objections to the proposal.

The external refurbishment of the property including new slate roof covering and alterations to and removal of the existing rooflights will have a positive impact on the appearance of the building.

In conclusion, the change of use of a Council office to public library within Greenock Town Centre merits support and accords with the principles of the Local Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the application be granted.

Stuart Jamieson  
Head of Regeneration and Planning

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Application form
2. Application plans
3. Inverclyde Local Plan
4. Consultation replies



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