

Report To: The Planning Board

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Report By: Head of Regeneration and Planning

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Plan 02/14

**Local Application
Development**

**Contact
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Subject: Refurbishment and partial demolition of an existing residential property to provide teaching support accommodation and construction of new build single storey extension containing teaching spaces and support spaces. Refurbishment and re-cladding of the school's existing science block. Landscaping works around existing buildings and new extension at St Columba's School, Duchal Road, Kilmacolm.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The grounds of the detached villas "Cromdale" and "Kilmorack" and the 3 storey science block building within the adjacent St Columba's School grounds combine to form the 0.4 hectare application site. "Kilmorack" is presently occupied whilst "Cromdale" lies vacant. The topography of the site rises towards the north and east. Stone walls form the west, north and east boundaries with mature trees and bushes reinforcing primarily the west and north boundaries.



The site is set within a residential area, with houses on Gryffe Road and Duchal Road to the north and east. Adjoining to the south is St. Columba's School. To the west, across Gryffe Road, is a railway cutting that hosts a section of the national cycle route, beyond which lies fields of the Duchal Estate.

PROPOSAL

The applicant seeks planning permission for the refurbishment of "Kilmorack" involving partial demolitions in order to prepare it for teaching support accommodation. Single storey extensions,

one linking “Kilmorack” and “Cromdale”, the others extending to the rear site boundary and directly behind “Kilmorack” and “Cromdale”, are proposed. Overall, 9 new classroom units and support and circulation spaces covering approximately 680 sq.m. will be formed within the extension. The rear wall of the new classroom extensions will replace in sections the existing rear boundary wall, with natural stone cladding used on the exposed parts facing the villas to the rear. The extensions to the rear will look onto an enclosed outdoor courtyard that may be used for teaching. Play space is concentrated between the buildings and Gryffe Road. Some of the existing planting within the site is to be removed, although most will remain and will be supplemented.

A range of facing materials is to be used on the extensions. Brickwork will front the elevation to the houses to the rear and to the front facing Gryffe Road. A pergola style screen with a zinc canopy will form part of the elevation onto Gryffe Road. The roofs will be planted as gardens to soften their visual impact when viewed from neighbours. The other external faces will be finished in glazing. The existing science block is to be refurbished with the introduction of new windows and ventilation outlets.

Refurbishment and a side extension to “Cromdale” initially formed part of the application but was subsequently excluded as the building may house a bat roost. A detailed survey is required and this would have delayed consideration of the application until the spring at the earliest. The applicant opted to remove works to “Cromdale”, and on resolution of bat protection issues a further application will be submitted later in the year.

In 2008 a previous planning application at this site which was refused permission on appeal, largely due to the potential adverse amenity impacts on the occupants of the adjacent villas to the rear from overlooking and playground noise. More recently, planning permission was refused in January 2013 for the development of new build facilities on land at Milton Wood within the Duchal Estate, Lochwinnoch Road. This was due to conflict with Green Belt and protected open space policy. As with these previous proposals, the applicant advises that the proposal will not increase the School roll but will provide space for two subject groupings, freeing up the main building for the “transitus” pupils to return full time to the School campus.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy H1 - Safeguarding the Character and Amenity of Residential Areas

The character and amenity of existing residential areas, identified on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded, and where practicable, enhanced. New residential development will be acceptable, in principle, subject to other relevant Local Plan policies.

Local Plan Policy H9 - Non-Residential Development Proposals within Residential Areas

The introduction of new, or the extension of, non-residential uses in existing residential areas will be acceptable only where such uses are compatible with the character and amenity of the area and satisfy other relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Local Plan Policy DS5 - Promotion of Quality in New Building Design and in Townscape/Landscaping

The urban environment and built heritage of Inverclyde will be protected and enhanced through controls on development that would have an unacceptable impact on the quality of this resource. Quality in new building design and landscaping will be encouraged to enhance Inverclyde's townscapes.

Local Plan Policy HR9 - Tree Preservation Orders

Inverclyde Council will continue to manage works within designated Tree Preservation Orders. Where it is considered necessary, for amenity reasons, to protect other trees or woodland areas, the Council will promote new Tree Preservation Orders.

Local Plan Policy UT1 - Sustainable Use of Existing Infrastructure

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to direct new development to areas where connections to existing service infrastructure and public utilities are available, and will work with developers, public utility companies and other providers of service infrastructure to ensure that the most efficient use is made of existing infrastructure. The Council will also encourage continued investment in existing infrastructure, with a view to improving service provision.

PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Policy RES1 - Safeguarding the Character and Amenity of Residential Areas

The character and amenity of residential areas, identified on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded and where practicable, enhanced. Proposals for new residential development will be assessed against and have to satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) compatibility with the character and amenity of the area;
- (b) details of proposals for landscaping;
- (c) proposals for the retention of existing landscape or townscape features of value on the site;
- (d) accordance with the Council's adopted roads guidance and Designing Streets, the Scottish Government's policy statement;
- (e) provision of adequate services; and
- (f) having regard to Supplementary Guidance on Planning Application Advice Notes.

Policy RES6 - Non-Residential Development within Residential Areas

Proposals for uses other than residential development in residential areas, including schools, recreational and other community facilities, will be acceptable subject to satisfying where appropriate, the following criteria:

- (a) compatibility with the character and amenity of the area;
- (b) impact on designated and locally valued open space;
- (c) impact of the volume, frequency and type of traffic likely to be generated;
- (d) infrastructure availability;
- (e) social and economic benefits; and
- (f) the cumulative impact of such a use or facilities on an area.

Policy ENV6 - Trees and Woodland

(a) Tree Preservation Orders

Trees, groups of trees and woodland designated as Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) will be safeguarded. Where it is considered necessary to protect other trees and woodland areas for amenity reasons, new Tree Preservation Orders will be promoted.

(b) Trees and Woodland

Trees and woodland will be protected and enhanced by having regard to the Scottish Government's Woodland Removal Policy and through:

- (i) promoting the planting of broad leaved and native species, or other species with known biodiversity benefits;

- (ii) protecting and promoting the positive management of hedgerows, street trees and any other trees considered to contribute to the amenity of the area;
- (iii) protecting and promoting the positive management of ancient and semi-ancient natural woodlands; and
- (iv) encouraging the planting of appropriate trees as an integral part of new development.

(c) Woodland Creation

Woodland creation proposals will be guided by the GCV Forestry and Woodland Framework Strategy (FWS), where priority locations for woodland management and expansion in Inverclyde will be assessed against the following criteria in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard:

- (i) the benefits of woodland creation to the value of the existing habitat;
- (ii) contribution to the enhancement of the wider Green Network;
- (iii) the safeguarding of nature conservation and archaeological heritage interests;
- (iv) safeguarding of water supplies;
- (v) the area's landscape character;
- (vi) integration with agricultural interests;
- (vii) existing and potential public access and recreational use;
- (viii) woodland design and the proposed mix of species; and
- (ix) points of access to and operational tracks through woodlands.

CONSULTATIONS

City Design Co-operative Ltd - Details of replacement planting and a long term tree management plan should be provided. The tree management plan should note how trees to be felled will be dealt with, tree removals anticipated over the next 5 years, and the nature of replacement planting to compensate for tree loss.

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services – No objections.

Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities – Recommend a condition to control external lighting.

Scottish Water - Works may require to be carried out by the developer to service the proposal at the developer's cost.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 29th November 2013 as there are no premises on neighbouring land.

SITE NOTICES

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

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

43 letters or e-mails of support have been received. The points may be summarised as follows:

- The proposals have properly considered the views and concerns of neighbours.
- The development will modernise and improve the school's teaching facilities and allow transitus pupils to be properly accommodated.
- The proposal will help secure this important asset for Kilmacolm to the economic benefit of the village.
- The proposal is more sympathetic to the surrounding environment than previous proposals.
- Development will result in improvement to appearance of existing villa.

One representation expressed observations as follows:

- The parapet wall to the front of the extension is unnecessary.
- The selection of facing materials is crucial and the Civic Trust wishes to be involved in the choice of materials.
- More thought needs to be given to the planting scheme facing Gryffe Road.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in determination of this application are the Inverclyde Local Plan, the proposed Inverclyde Local Development Plan, the consultation responses and the representations.

St Columba's School is set within a mainly residential area. Although the proposed new facilities are concentrated around "Kilmorack", this is within the ownership of the School. Compliance with Policy H1 of the Local Plan and the associated Policy RES1 of the proposed Local Development Plan requires consideration against Policy H9 of the Local Plan and Policy RES6 of the proposed Local Development Plan.

Policy H9 states that the extension of non-residential uses in existing residential areas will be acceptable only where such uses are compatible with the character and amenity of the area. Policy RES6 makes specific reference to schools being acceptable developments subject to qualifying criteria and forms a sound basis for assessment of the impact on character and amenity.

Criterion (a) Compatibility with the character and amenity of the area.

The school is a well established use in this locality, so a pattern of associated pedestrian and vehicular traffic movement is well established and the School itself has contributed to how this part of Kilmacolm functions. This land use proposal is compatible with the overall general amenity. Visually, the alterations to the existing school building will be an improvement, while the ground floor level extensions to "Kilmorack" do not have a high degree of visibility from the public domain. From Gryffe Road the existing stone wall and dense vegetation along this boundary will restrict visibility, allowing for some thinning of the vegetation. The neighbouring villas on Duchal Road will also have limited visibility of the proposed extensions due to ground level differences and the proposed boundary treatment. The proposed extensions will not impose, with the planted flat gardens softening any impact. I am encouraged that common boundary treatments have been agreed in advance between the applicant and the affected neighbours. Overall, I consider that the proposed extensions are of an appropriate design and finish subject to the confirmation of facing materials.

Criterion (b) Impact on designated and locally valued open space.

No open space will be lost as a result of the proposed development. I note however that there is a Tree Preservation Order affecting one tree within the grounds of "Cromdale". The proposals have been designed to have no impact on the tree and, therefore, the proposal also complies with Policy HR9 of the Local Plan and Policy ENV6 of the proposed Local Development Plan.

Criterion (c) Impact of the volume, frequency and type of traffic likely to be generated.

The School roll is not increasing and the proposals should not therefore generate any additional traffic. I note that there are no objections from the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services on road safety or parking grounds.

Criterion (d) Infrastructure availability.

It is noted that Scottish Water consider that some upgrading works may be required. This is a matter for the applicant to address with Scottish Water under separate legislation. In all other respects the site is already serviced by infrastructure, thus ensuring compliance with Local Plan Policy UT1.

Criterion (e) Social and economic benefits and the cumulative impact of such a use or facilities on an area.

Approval of the proposed development will help to secure the longer term future of the School within Kilmacolm, with representations drawing attention to the contribution the School has in making Kilmacolm a desirable place to live, contributing to spending in local shopping facilities, and the interaction of school pupils with local causes.

I am therefore satisfied from my analysis of Policies H9 of the Local Plan and RES6 of the proposed Local Development Plan that the proposals are compatible with the amenity and character of the area and, consequently with Policies H1 of the Local Plan and RES1 of the proposed Local Development Plan. I also conclude that the quality of the design of the extensions ensures compliance with Policy DS5 of the Local Plan.



The proposal complies with the Local Plan and the proposed Local Development Plan, but it remains to be considered whether or not there are any other material considerations which suggest that planning permission should not be granted. There are no issues raised by consultees that cannot be addressed by conditions or advisory notes on a grant of planning permission, and I note the supportive comments made by those who made representations. I do, however, require to consider a number of observations.

The design form of the extensions, including parapet walls, bring the two former houses together in a uniform way, and the parapet walls forms part of the design. The continuation of this feature from three other elevations onto the front is consistent with this aim and I do not support its removal. I also note that the applicant has identified the parapets as an essential design feature in preventing illegal access to the roof. As for the choice of facing materials, this matter will be addressed by condition and controlled by Inverclyde Council as planning authority. Finally, the Council's landscape consultant has already advised that further information on the proposed landscaping scheme requires to be submitted. The principle of what is proposed is, nevertheless, acceptable

and a decision on the application need not be delayed nor further information sought before a decision is made as this matter may be addressed by conditions.

Overall, I am satisfied that the applicant has addressed previous concerns of overlooking of the adjacent villas and, by concentrating the play/activity area to the front of the villas facing Gryffe Road, the previous concerns over noise disturbance are overcome. I am also satisfied that the proposed development accords with the Local Plan and the proposed Local Development Plan and that there are no material considerations which suggest that planning permission should not be granted.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to the following conditions:-

1. That before their use, samples of all facing materials to be used on the extensions hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The approved materials shall thereafter be used unless a variation is agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.
2. That prior to the commencement of development full details of all replacement planting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The approved planting shall thereafter be carried out within the first planting season following the end of construction of the extensions and conversion of the villa.
3. That any of the planting approved in terms of condition 2 above which, within the first 5 years from the date of planting dies, is damaged, becomes diseased or is removed shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.
4. That prior to the commencement of development full details of a long term management plan for the planting approved in terms of condition 2 above shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The plan shall thereafter come into effect on completion of the planting.
5. That prior to any construction work starting on site, tree protection measures in accordance with Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations, currently 5837:2012, shall be erected and not removed during the course of construction work.
6. That clearance of vegetation within the application site shall take place outwith the bird breeding season of March to July.
7. That all surface water drainage from the site shall be treated in accordance with the principles of the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Manual (C697) (CIRIA 2007). Before development commences, details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority of the maintenance regime for the water detention areas.
8. All external lighting on the application site should comply with the Scottish Government Guidance Note "Controlling Light Pollution and Reducing Lighting Energy Consumption".

Reasons

1. To ensure the suitability of the facing materials.
2. To ensure the suitability of the approved planting.
3. To ensure retention of the approved planting scheme.

4. To ensure retention of the approved planting scheme.
5. To ensure retention of the trees not to be removed.
6. In the interest of biodiversity.
7. To control runoff from the site to reduce the risk of flooding.
8. To protect the amenity of the immediate area, the creation of nuisance due to light pollution and to support the reduction of energy consumption.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plans.
2. Inverclyde Local Plan.
3. Proposed Inverclyde Local Development Plan.
4. Consultation replies.
5. Representations.



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