



## **Agenda Item 9**

**PART-DEMOLITION, EXTENSION  
AND CONVERSION OF CHURCH TO  
FORM 15 FLATTED DWELLINGS  
WITH ASSOCIATED  
INFRASTRUCTURE AT ERSKINE  
CHURCH, HODGE STREET, FALKIRK,  
FK1 1BL, FOR ERSKINE  
COMMUNITY HALLS LTD -  
P/20/0361/LBC**

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject:** PART-DEMOLITION, EXTENSION AND CONVERSION OF CHURCH TO FORM 15 FLATTED DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AT ERSKINE CHURCH, HODGE STREET, FALKIRK, FK1 1BL, FOR ERSKINE COMMUNITY HALLS LTD - P/20/0361/LBC

**Meeting:** PLANNING COMMITTEE

**Date:** 21 January 2021

**Author:** DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

**Local Members:** Ward - Falkirk South

Councillor Lorna Binnie  
Councillor John Patrick  
Councillor Pat Reid

**Community Council:** No Community Council

**Case Officer:** Julie Seidel, (Planning Officer) Ext. 4880

[View this Application on Public Access](#)

**1. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL / SITE LOCATION**

- 1.1 This application relates to the conversion of Erskine Church to form 15 flatted dwellings. The gothic church is a Category 'C' Listed building, located near Falkirk town centre at Hodge Street.
- 1.2 The development includes the demolition of a single storey kitchen annexe at the rear elevation, replacement extension to the first and second floors, with internal and external alterations to facilitate conversion.

**2. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

- 2.1 The application was called in by Councillor John Patrick for the following reason:
  - The parking provision for 15 flats is not sufficient and access to and from the site by additional traffic is a potential danger at the road junction. The application requires review by committee.

**3. SITE HISTORY**

- 3.1 A planning application (P/20/0364/FUL) for the same development is pending decision.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1 Historic Environment Scotland have not objected to the application and offer no comment.
- 4.2 Falkirk Council's Museum Services have not objected to the application. The use of the church as a community hall is noted as being unsustainable and the conversion to dwellings offers one of the few long term solutions for the building's future. Museum Services comment that the development is an interesting conversion, which would retain much of the building's exterior character whilst adding contrasting modern elements, as follows:
- The new tops for the old stair towers would retain symmetry;
  - Dormer windows (allowing the roof space to be utilised) are of contrasting materials, whilst not being disproportionately sized;
  - The proposed upper storey on the 'town house' is located towards the rear of the building at a less conspicuous elevation; and
  - The proposed rear extension would be largely hidden from view as a result of the terracing of the hillside and massing of the church building.
- 4.3 Museum Services note that the cavernous spaces of the church interior cannot be retained (which is understandable), however, the main features such as the elongated vertical windows and the columns would be a major element of the character of the new apartments.

## **5. COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

- 5.1 There is no active community council serving the application site area.

## **6. PUBLIC REPRESENTATION**

- 6.1 In the course of the application, 1 objection was received, raising the following issues:
- The development is a good reuse of the building but not enough parking is provided.
- 6.2 The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland objected to the application, as follows:
- The adaptation of the building would ensure its survival, however, modern interventions to the exterior impact the historic aspects of the church and its character. The proposed glass turrets would not respect the gothic character and would create a new silhouette which emphasises the turrets over the existing tower and roof;
  - The development does not accord with supplementary guidance for residential extensions or development in conservation areas;
  - The loss of traditional slate is unnecessary. The use of zinc and glass is inappropriate; and
  - Professional relocation of the stained glass windows and church organ should be secured as part of the planning application.

## 7. DETAILED APPRAISAL

Under section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, the determination of planning applications for local and major developments shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Accordingly,

### 7a The Development Plan

- 7a.1 [The Falkirk Local Development Plan \(LDP2\)](#) was adopted on 7 August 2020. The proposed development was assessed against the following policy or policies:

#### Policy PE01 – Placemaking

- 7a.2 The application is supported by policy PE01 'Placemaking' as the development would promote the six qualities of successful places as defined in Scottish Planning Policy. The development would conserve and enhance a historic environment feature, securing its long term future. The scale, siting and design of the converted and extended church would respond positively to the site surroundings and townscape value of the area.

#### Policy PE07 - Listed Buildings

- 7a.3 The Council supports, in principle, the sustainable re-use of the historic built environment. It is considered that the proposed development would result in the sensitive re-use of the listed building. It is considered that the proposed alterations and extension would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the building or its special architectural or historical interest. The application accords with policy PE07 'Listed Buildings'.

#### Policy PE09 - Areas of Townscape Value

- 7a.4 The re-use of the church would respect and maintain the distinctive character of the area, in accordance with policy PE09 'Areas of Townscape Value'.

- 7a.5 Accordingly, the application is assessed as being in accordance with the Development Plan.

### 7b Material Considerations

- 7b.1 The material considerations to be assessed are National Planning Policy and Guidance, supplementary guidance and the assessment of public representations.

#### **National Planning Policies and Guidance**

- 7b.2 Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change Guidance note on the 'Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings' advises that decisions affecting the historic environment should ensure that its benefits are secured for present and future generations. It notes that for a building to stay in use in the long term, change will be necessary and this reflects changes over time in how we use our buildings and what we expect of them.

- 7b.3 In this instance the community church use is no longer viable. A change of use to residential was identified as a viable and sustainable use by the applicant and one which could retain many of the key characteristics and features of the church building, with minimal alteration to the external fabric.

- 7b.4 Proposed changes to the building include the partial demolition of the kitchen annexe and first / second floor extension to the rear elevation, new internal floor structures, glass turret extensions, dormer windows, roof lights and roof extension. Materials of zinc, timber cladding and aluminium are proposed.
- 7b.5 It is considered that the proposed changes to the building are required to facilitate the conversion to residential use, with a high level of residential amenity achieved (i.e. in relation to architectural design, space and outlook etc). The scale, design and materials are considered to be sensitive interventions which will sit well with existing historic fabric without dominating. The proposed alterations and extensions to the building are considered to be acceptable.

### **Falkirk Council Non-statutory Supplementary Guidance**

- 7b.6 Falkirk Council Supplementary Guidance is in the process of being updated. Until such time that supplementary guidance for LDP2 has been adopted, LDP1 supplementary guidance continues to provide more detailed guidance on planning policies contained in LDP2.
- 7b.7 The application accords with the general advice contained in SG16 'Listed Buildings and Unlisted Properties in Conservation Areas'.

### **Assessment of Public Representations**

- 7b.8 The comments in relation to the reuse of the building are noted. It is considered that a reduction in off-street parking is justified in this instance and is assessed fully as part of the planning application (P/20/0364/FUL). The objections from the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland are noted. It is, however, considered that the proposed development is required to secure the long term use and survival of a historic asset. The alterations to the building are considered to be sensitive to the character of the building and the minimum required to allow its conversion.

### **Human Rights Assessment**

- 7b.9 The planning system by its very nature respects the rights of the individual whilst acting in the interest of the wider community. It is an inherent part of the decision-making process to assess the effects that a proposal will have on individuals and weigh these against the wider public interest in determining whether development should be allowed to proceed. The Human Rights Act 1998 adds a new test of proportionality to local authorities' decision making and in its assessment of development proposals the planning authority should be satisfied that it had acted proportionately, whether the action is proportionate to its aim. The Human Rights Act 1998 has been considered in reaching a recommendation to Planning Committee.

### **7c Conclusion**

- 7c.1 The application is assessed as being in accordance with the Development Plan. The sensitive re-use of listed buildings is supported to ensure the sustainable management of the historic built environment. The proposed alterations and extension to the building would not adversely affect the character, appearance or special architectural and historical interest of the building. It is recommended that Members grant Listed Building Consent.

**8. RECOMMENDATION**

**8.1 It is therefore recommended that the Committee grant Listed Building Consent subject to the following condition(s):-**

- 1. The works hereby consented shall be implemented in accordance with the plan(s) itemised in the informative below and forming part of this consent.**
- 2. Samples of all external materials to be used in the development shall be submitted for the consideration of the Planning Authority and no work shall begin until written approval of the Planning Authority has been given.**
- 3. Prior to the commencement of development on site the applicant shall submit information on the proposed future location/use of stained glass and the church organ.**

**Reason(s):-**

- 1. As these drawings and details constitute the consented works.**
- 2. To protect the character and appearance of the listed building.**
- 3. To ensure that church features are reused / retained on or off site.**

**Informative(s):-**

- 1. In accordance with section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, this consent lapses on the expiration of a period of 3 years beginning with the date on which this consent is granted unless the development to which this consent relates is begun before that expiration.**
- 2. For the avoidance of doubt, the plan(s) to which this decision refer(s) bear our online reference number(s) 01A, 02 - 22 and Supporting Documents.**

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**pp Acting Director of Development Services**

**Date: 12 January 2021**

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Falkirk Local Development Plan 2
2. Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change Guidance note on the 'Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings'
3. Objection received from the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, RIAS, 15 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, EH1 2BB on 21 September 2020
4. Objection received from Mrs Briony Nimmo, 27 Neilson Street, Falkirk, FK15AQ on 28 September 2020

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 504880 and ask for Julie Seidel, Planning Officer.

## **Policy Schedule**

### **PE01 Placemaking**

Development proposals should promote the six qualities of successful places as defined in Scottish Planning Policy by addressing the following principles:

#### **1. Distinctive**

- Existing natural and historic environment features should be identified, conserved, enhanced and integrated sensitively into development. Further guidance is set out in Policies PE05-PE27, and accompanying Supplementary Guidance SG07- SG12;
- The scale, siting and design of new development should respond positively and sympathetically to the site's surroundings, and create a coherent structure of buildings, streets and public spaces that are attractive, distinctive and create a sense of identity within the development. Further guidance is set out in SG02 'Neighbourhood Design';
- Development should include landscaping and green infrastructure which enhances, structures and unifies the development, assists integration with its surroundings, manages surface water sustainably, and contributes, where appropriate, to the wider green network. Further guidance is set out in SG05 'Green Infrastructure and New Development';
- Developments of a significant scale should contribute to public art either through a contribution to an existing local project, or through provision of public art within the development, guided by a strategy prepared by the developer in consultation with the Council and Falkirk Community Trust. Further guidance is set out within SG13 'Developer Contributions' and the public art procurement guide produced by Falkirk Community Trust.

#### **2. Safe and pleasant**

- Development should create a safe and secure environment for all users through the provision of high levels of natural surveillance for access routes and public spaces and provision of safe access for all. Further guidance is set out in SG02 'Neighbourhood Design';
- Development should not exacerbate existing air quality issues or introduce new sources of pollution which impact on local air quality without appropriate mitigation.

#### **3. Easy to move around and beyond**

- Development should be designed to encourage the use of active travel and sustainable, integrated transport. Further guidance is set out in Policies IR05-IR07;
- Development should build on the existing network of paths, edges, nodes, districts and landmarks to create places that people can navigate easily around.

#### **4. Welcoming**

- Streets and public spaces should have buildings fronting them or, where this is not possible, a high quality hard or soft landscape treatment. Further guidance is set out in SG02 'Neighbourhood Design'.



## **5. Adaptable**

- Development should be designed to consider how people use places differently, for example depending on age or degree of personal mobility;
- Where appropriate, development should provide a mix of building densities, tenures and typologies where a variety of diverse but compatible uses can be integrated.

## **6. Resource efficient**

- In support of climate change mitigation, development should promote the efficient use of natural resources and the minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions through: energy efficient design; choice and sourcing of materials; reduction of waste; recycling of materials and incorporating space to separate materials at source; incorporation of low and zero carbon generating technologies and integration into neighbourhood and district heating networks. Further guidance is set out in Policies IR12-IR14;
- In support of climate change adaptation, infrastructure needs and their impacts should be identified and addressed by sustainable mitigation techniques, with particular regard to drainage, surface water management, flooding, traffic, road safety and noise;
- Provision should be made for the satisfactory future management and maintenance of all public areas, landscaping and infrastructure.

## **PE07 Listed Buildings**

The Council supports the sustainable re-use and management of the historic built environment. Accordingly:

1. The sensitive restoration and re-use of listed buildings will be supported;
2. Proposals to alter or extend a listed building should not adversely affect the character, appearance, or special architectural or historic interest of the building;
3. Development proposals within the curtilage or affecting the setting of a listed building should not adversely affect the character, appearance, special architectural or historic interest of the building, or its setting;
4. Proposals for the total or substantial demolition of a listed building will only be supported in exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that:
  - The existing building is no longer of special interest;
  - The existing building is incapable of physical repair and re-use, as shown by the submission and verification of a thorough structural condition report;
  - The costs of repair and re-use are such that it is not economically viable; or
  - The demolition of the building is essential for the delivery of significant economic benefits for the local or wider community.

5. Proposals affecting listed buildings or their setting should conform with SG12 'Listed Buildings and Unlisted Properties in Conservation Areas'.

### **PE09 Areas of Townscape Value**

The Council recognises the architectural and historic merit and potential of the additional areas of townscape value identified on the Proposals Map, which do not currently have Conservation Area status. Within these areas:

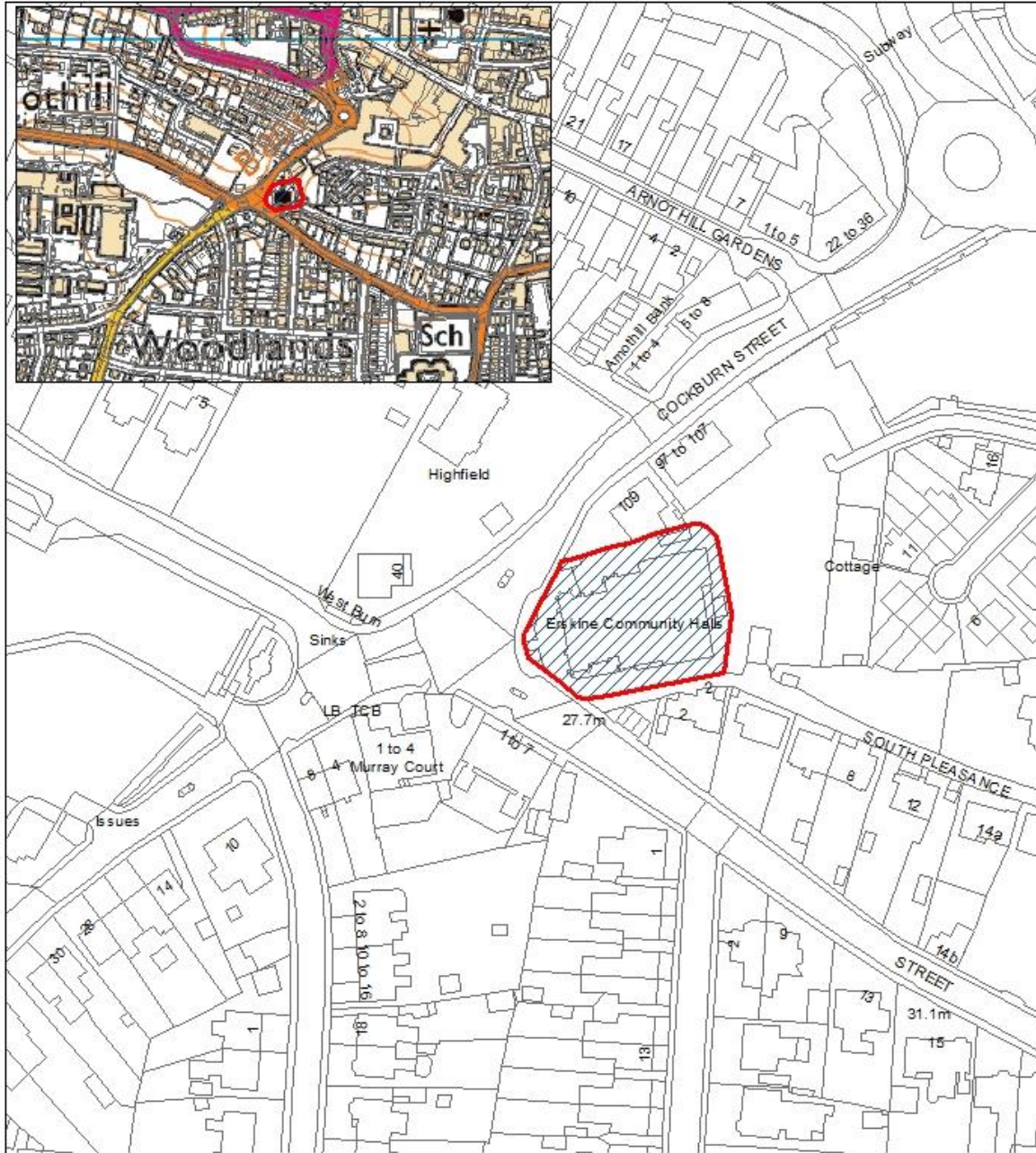
1. The Council will undertake Character Appraisals to determine whether the areas merit designation as Conservation Areas, either as new Conservation Areas, or as extensions to existing ones; and
2. Development proposals will be required to fit with the distinctive character of the area with particular reference to the historic pattern and density of development; its setting; the architectural style, massing and materials of buildings; landscape treatments; and boundary features.

# Planning Committee

## Planning Application Location Plan

# P/20/0361/LBC

This plan is for location purposes only. It should not be interpreted as an exact representation of the application site.



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