Item No: 09
Appn Ref No:
19/0235

Date of Committee: 07/06/2019

Applicant:
Carlisle City Council
Agent:
WYG Engineering Limited

Parish:
Carlisle
Ward:
Cathedral \& Carlisle

Location: Civic Centre, Rickergate, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Proposal: External And Internal Alterations And Refurbishment In Connection With Flood Recovery Works

Date of Receipt:
20/03/2019

Statutory Expiry Date
15/05/2019
REPORT Case Officer: Stephen Daniel

## 1. Recommendation

1.1 It is recommended that this application is approved with conditions.

## 2. Main Issues

2.1 Impact Of The Proposal On The Civic Centre/ City Centre Conservation Area
2.2 Impact On Listed Buildings/ Non-designated Heritage Assets
2.3 Flood Risk
2.4 Designing Out Crime
2.5 Biodiversity

## 3. Application Details

## The Site

3.1 The Civic Centre is a large modernist structure that lies within Carlisle City Centre Conservation Area. It opened in 1964 and has been the headquarters of Carlisle City Council ever since.
3.2 The Civic Centre comprises three main linked elements: an eleven-storey
tower; a two-storey civic suite which incorporates the main entrance; and an octagonal building (also referred to as the rotunda) which contains the Council chamber. The original scheme included the construction of a large assembly room to the south of the complex which would have formed a piazza but this was never built.
3.3 The architectural style of the Civic Centre is characterised by simple, plain, geometric forms. Similar to other modernist structures, the Civic Centre is characterised by the use of reinforced concrete and steel with large windows set in horizontal bands.
3.4 The ground floor of the building was flooded in 2015 and has been out of use ever since, with temporary portacabins being used to provide additional floor space.
3.5 The Civic Centre building is adjoined by a car park to the south, beyond which lies Drovers Lane and a Debenham's department store; by Rickergate to the west beyond which lies the Magistrates Court and Ristorante Adriano; by Hardwicke Circus roundabout to the north; and by Lowther Street Car Park to the east.

## The Proposal

3.6 The application includes a series of minor alterations and refurbishments including:

- Construction of a new entrance lobby along the western elevation of the Civic Centre.
- Public realm improvements between the western elevation of the Civic Centre and Rickergate. This will include the removal of two trees.
- Installation of an Air Handling Unit (AHU) on the roof of the two storey civic-suite, including installation of a barriered walkway to the AHU to allow maintenance access.
- Internal refurbishments to the ground floor.
- Alterations of elevations, including: blocking up of the existing entrance; removal of windows and wall panels below and installation of full height windows along the western elevation; removal and filling-in of the existing fire door on the north elevation; and removal and filling-in of a pair of double doors and two windows on the eastern elevation.
3.7 This application is submitted in parallel to, but is distinctly separate from, another application which proposes the demolition of the octagonal rotunda element of the civic centre and an extension of the existing car park (19/0234).

4. Summary of Representations
4.1 This application has been advertised by means of site and press notices as well as notification letters sent to two neighbouring properties. No verbal or written representations have been made during the consultation period.

## 5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Cumbria Constabulary - North Area Community Safety Unit: - offered some advice on security measures;

Environment Agency: - has no comments to make;
Cumbria County Council - (Highways \& Lead Local Flood Authority): - no objections, subject to conditions (Construction Phase Traffic Management Plan);

Carlisle \& District Civic Trust: - it appears to have been missed that the building design was "Commended" in the 1966 National Civic Trust Awards representing the North West Region.
Proposals arose in 2014 when a consultation by the Council revealed one option under consideration was for demolition of the Civic Centre and substitution by a retail development scheme. Dis-affection was noted but also many spoke up in favour of retention of the building and its quality. Need to see whether the proposed alterations are being handled as sensitively as required to retain as much of the existing concept until such times as it becomes truly physically unusable. A City should reflect its development and history through its architecture. The air handling plant is located prominently on the roof of the current committee rooms. Exposed plant equipment is a style more akin to the hi-tech industrial architecture style of the 1990's not a classic modern movement 1960's building of the 'international style'. Such equipment requires designing into the building in a more sensitive way. Although it is true that it could easily be removed without harm to the original in future it is the visual damage it would do during the time it is in place. The location of the roof plant could be highly visible from approaches down the hill from Scotch Street and the City centre. The Heritage Statement notes that the building is a non-designated heritage asset. The value of such an asset is for local determination over the opinion and views of consultants and decision-makers from elsewhere. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF is clear "Balanced judgements should be made when weighing applications that effect non-designated heritage assets". the Civic Trust takes the view that the Civic Centre offers at least a 'medium' level of 'significance' in the city and therefore disagree with WYG. Original features of quality should be retained along with the external completeness of all the elements of the original design.
How many other buildings in the city centre have been awarded a national commendation for design? Suggest not many so the loss or disfigurement of one that has should be firmly resisted.

## 6. Officer's Report

## Assessment

6.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990/Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that an application for planning permission is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
6.2 The relevant planning policies against which the application is required to be assessed are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and Policies SP1, SP4, SP6, SP7, HE3, HE7, CC4, CC5, CM3, CM4, G13 and GI6 of the Carlisle District Local Plan (CDLP) 2015-2030. The Supplementary Planning Documents Trees and Development and Designing Out Crime are also material planning considerations.
6.3 The proposal raises the following planning issues.

## 1. Impact Of The Proposal On The Civic Centre/ City Centre Conservation Area

6.4 The application is accompanied by a Built Heritage Statement (HS). This considers that the Civic Centre is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset, with a low heritage value. The HS considers that the significance of the Civic Centre is considered to derive from: its association with post-war building of large modern civic centres to emphasise civic pride, identity and the progressive nature of local authorities; its competent modernist design and some internal features of interest which have been retained; and its role as an important public building within Carlisle.
6.5 The application site is located within the City Centre Conservation Area. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 highlights the statutory duties of Local Planning Authorities whilst exercising of their powers in respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area. The aforementioned section states that:
"special attention shall be paid to the desirability or preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area".
6.6 The aims of the 1990 Act are reiterated in both the NPPF, PPG and policies within the adopted Local Plan. Policy HE7 of the Local Plan advises that proposals should preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of conservation areas.
6.7 Case law (South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment (1992)) has established the principle that if development has a neutral impact on a conservation area, in that it made no positive contribution but left it unharmed, it could properly be said to preserve the character and appearance of that area.
6.8 A new entrance lobby would be added to the western elevation of the Civic Centre. This would project out 3 m and would have a flat roof which would
be 4 m above ground level. The lobby would have full height windows to match the remainder of the frontage and sliding glass doors on both side elevations with external walls being zinc faced.
6.9 The existing entrance would be infilled with a new full height aluminium window in the centre with the adjoining columns being built-up in blockwork which would be finished in an external dry dash render to match the existing building. The existing concrete ramp would be removed.
6.10 The existing windows and masonry panels on the two-storey element of the western elevation would be removed and be replaced by new full height aluminium windows to match those in the new entrance lobby. New fire doors would be installed to the north of the existing entrance.
6.11 A fire door and the associated galvanised steel staircase in the north elevation would be removed. A new polyester powder coated ventilation louvred grille would be installed at a high level, with the opening below the louvre being infilled with blockwork and rendered to match the adjacent panels. A further six louvred grilles would replace high level windows on the north elevation of the building.
6.12 In the east elevation two existing windows with infill panels below and pair of double doors with fan lights above would be removed with the new opening being infilled with blockwork finished in dry dash render to match the existing. Six new louvred grilles would also replace high level windows on the east elevation.
6.13 In the south elevation one existing window would be infilled with blockwork which would be rendered to match the infill panel below, with two high levels windows being replaced by louvred grilles. Existing windows with masonry panels below would also be replaced but on a like for like basis.
6.14 A new air handing unit would be added to the southern end of the roof of the two-storey section of the building. This is required to improve energy efficiency and comfort levels within the building. The unit would be supported on a steel frame and would be adjoined by an access platform for maintenance purposes. Step would provide access from the roof to the access platform. The top of the unit would sit 2.5 m above the height of the roof.
6.15 The area to the front of the building, adjacent to Rickergate, would be enhanced. The existing flower beds and planters would be removed. Two existing cherry trees would also be removed but the Trees Survey that has been submitted with the application identifies that one of these is dying.
6.16 New planting beds would be provided adjacent to Rickergate and these would incorporate six trees. Three further trees would be planted adjacent to the northern end of the building. The majority of the area would be block paved and this would gradually slope up to the new entrance. New street furniture would be incorporated into the block paved area, including benches, bins, cycle stands, signage and a flagpole.
6.17 The HS considers the impact of the proposals on the Civic Centre and these are summarised below:

- the existing entrance doors are modern and their removal does not represent the loss of original fabric;
- the new entrance lobby and the installation of full height ground floor windows on the western elevation would result in impact on the original design concept of the Civic Centre by introducing new elements and removing some original fabric. However, the rhythm of the structural framework and fenestration pattern would remain unchanged and the new entrance would a more prominent, accessible and welcoming entrance;
- the new existing concrete ramp and steel balustrade would be removed;
- the installation of the air handling unit would lead to the introduction of a new element not in keeping with the original design of the building but this is required to improve efficiency and comfort levels within the building;
- the removal of existing window and door openings on the north and east elevations would lead to the loss of original window openings the rhythm of the structural framework would be retained;
- the removal of the existing fire exit on the north elevation would allow an unattractive galvanised steel staircase and landing to be removed;
- public realm improvements to the front of the building would improve the streetscape along Rickergate and the immediate setting of the Civic Centre.
6.18 The HS concludes that the overall resulting negative impact on the heritage significance of the building would be low. The introduction of new elements and the loss of original fabric would be partly mitigated through improvements to the public realm along Rickergate.
6.19 The HS considers that the Civic Centre makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the City Centre Conservation Area. Whilst it acts as a local landmark, the adjoining surface car park detracts from the character and appearance of the conservation area. The HS considers that the proposed external changes to the Civic Centre would have an overall neutral impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. It acknowledges that the air handling unit would have negative visual impact on the conservation area, whilst the public realm improvements along Rickergate would have a positive impact.
6.20 The Council's Heritage Officer has been consulted on the application. He considers that the proposal is acceptable and has a neutral impact on the conservation area and the Civic Centre as a non-designated heritage asset. Consideration should be given to using more elegant cycle stands than those currently proposed, with those in Castle Street being preferred. Clarification should be sought on the proposed trees and consideration should be given to planting specimens of higher wildlife value, in particular for the benefit of pollinating insects.
6.21 The applicant has confirmed that it is happy to use the same cycle stands (Furnitubes Fin Cycle Stands) as used in Castle Street. A condition has been added to the permission which requires the submission of a landscaping scheme for agreement by the City Council prior to the new trees being planted.
6.22 The Carlisle and District Civic Trust notes that the building design was commended in the 1966 National Civic Trust Awards and considers that the building offers at least a medium level of significance in the city. The loss or disfigurement of a building which has been awarded a national commendation for design should be firmly resisted.
6.23 The Civic Trust has concerns about the proposed air handling plant which is located prominently on the roof. Exposed plant equipment is a style more akin to the hi-tech industrial style of the 1990s and not a classic modern movement 1960s building of the 'international' style. The location of the roof plant would be highly visible from Scotch Street and the city centre and would cause visual harm. Such equipment should be designed into the building in a more sensitive way.
6.24 The air handling unit is required to provide heating and cooling to the ground floor areas of the Civic Centre being refurbished following flood damage in 2015. The air handling unit needs to be located in a position relatively close to the areas being served by the same, in order to function correctly. Combined with the required size of the unit and the presence of existing photovoltaic cells located on adjacent first floor roofs, there are limited locations available for the unit. Potential options are limited to the current proposed roof top location, or at ground level to the perimeter of the building.
6.25 Due to the presence of the tower and external basement accesses on the north side of the building, potential external locations are limited to the areas adjacent to the south, east or west elevations. There are limited areas available away from ground floor windows, meaning the unit would have a potentially detrimental effect to both the interior and exterior of the refurbished space. In addition, if positioned at ground level, the unit would be susceptible to vandalism and a secure compound or similar would be required.
6.26 In addition, a significant problem with positioning the air handling unit at ground level, is the need to design a flood resilient building. There are a number of measures implemented in the design of the refurbishment, including the positioning of the air handling unit. The flooding of December 2015 reached close to the top of the ground floor windows and would have submerged the proposed air handling unit had it been in place at ground level. As a result, the air handling unit and associated components located below the level of the flooding would require replacement, with both cost and time scale implications for reinstatement works. An air handling unit located on the roof would have been unaffected by the December 2015 flooding.
6.27 Whilst the air handling unit would be visible, particularly in views from the edge of the City Centre, it would be seen in the context of the eleven-storey civic centre which would be prominent in any views and this would reduce the visual impact of the air handling unit.
6.28 In light of the above, the scale and design of the proposed works are acceptable and the proposals would not have an adverse impact on the Civic Centre or on the City Centre Conservation Area.

2. Impact On Listed Buildings/ Non-designated Heritage Assets
6.29 Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 highlights the statutory duties of Local Planning Authorities whilst exercising of their powers in respect of listed buildings. The aforementioned section states that:
"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
6.30 Policy HE3 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to ensure that Listed Buildings and their settings will be preserved and enhanced.
6.31 Nos. 20-28 Scotch Street/ 1 West Tower Street and Carlisle Public Markets are Grade II Listed Buildings. The Civic Centre is visible from the front of these buildings and is considered to form part of the listed buildings wider setting (albeit only a small part of its wider setting.
6.32 The Carlisle and District Magistrates Court and the Old Fire Station which lie directly to the west of the Civic Centre are considered to be non-designated heritage assets. The Civic Centre is visible from the Magistrates Court and is considered to from part of it's setting.
6.33 The Heritage Statement notes that the Civic Centre forms a small part of the wider setting of 20-28 Scotch Street/ 1 West Tower Street,Carlisle Public Markets and the Magistrate's Court. However, the views between these buildings and the Civic Centre do not contribute to understanding the significance of these buildings and, as a result, the proposed external changes to the Civic Centre would not impact negatively on their significance.
6.34 In light of the above, the proposals would not have an adverse impact on the setting of any listed buildings or non-designated heritage assets.

## 3. Flood Risk

6.35 The Civic Centre is located within a defended Flood Zone 3 area and in accordance with the NPPF a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been submitted with the application.
6.36 The FRA notes that the site would be at risk of flooding from the River Eden if there were no defences. A residual risk remains in the event that the defences fail or are overtopped as occurred in December 2015. The site is at low risk of flooding from surface water, overland flows, sewers, groundwater and reservoir failure.
6.37 Given the site is at risk of flooding from events that exceed the standard of protection provided by the existing flood defences, it is proposed to retrofit flood mitigation and resilience measures as part of the proposed refurbishment of the building and to cease use of the basement.
6.38 The following resilience measures are proposed within the ground floor:

- floor to be provided with low-cost carpet as tiled floors are not appropriate;
- $\quad$ suspended ceilings are to be minimised;
- non-fire doors would be fitted on lift off hinges so they can be easily removed;
- ground floor partitions are to be concrete blockwork for enhanced flood resistance;
- services to the ground floor are to be run in ceiling voids and taken down to desk positions;
- services are to wired from plant rooms located at first floor;
- controls to basement plant to be moved to first floor plant rooms where possible.
6.39 In the event of a major flooding warning being issued, the building would be allowed to flood. To achieve this, the main entrance doors would be partially opened together with any side doors and this would allow water to flow through more easily into and out of the building and ensure there is no significant build up of a water head between the inside and outside of the building.
6.40 These measures would ensure that in the event of any future major flooding, the building is resilient and would be able to be brought back into use in a timely manner.
6.41 The Lead Local Flood Authority has been consulted on the application and has confirmed that is has no objections to the application, as it is deemed that the proposals would not affect flood risk on site, or downstream of the works.


## 4. Designing Out Crime

6.42 The Crime Prevention Officer has been consulted on the application. He has suggested a number of measures that should be introduced to reduce the risk of crime. These have been forwarded onto the applicant for consideration.
6.43 The Crime Prevention Officer has raised the potential issue of vehicles
accessing the pedestrianised area to the front of the building. In order to reduce the risk of this happening, the street furniture proposed to the front of the building can be repositioned to restrict vehicular access. This would be undertaken in consultation with the Crime Prevention Officer.

## 5. Biodiversity

6.44 The existing flower beds and planters to the front of the building would be removed. Two existing cherry trees would also be removed but the Tree Survey that has been submitted with the application identifies that one of these tress is dying.
6.45 In mitigation, new planting beds would be provided adjacent to Rickergate and these would incorporate shrubs and six trees. Three further trees would be planted adjacent to the northern end of the building.
6.46 In light of the above, the proposal would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity and should have a positive impact given the level of planting proposed.

## Conclusion

6.47 The scale and design of the proposed works would be acceptable and they would not have an adverse impact on the Civic Centre, the Carlisle City Centre Conservation Area, on any listed buildings, on any undesignated heritage assets, or on biodiversity. Flood resilience measures and measures to reduce the risk of crime would be introduced into the building. In all aspects, the proposals are complaint with the relevant national and local planning policies.

## 7. Planning History

7.1 Since 2010, a number of applications for roof mounted structures such as antenna, photovoltaic panels and generator equipment have been approved.
7.2 In February 2015, advertisement consent was granted for the display of 1 no. internally illuminated LED sign (14/0914).
8. Recommendation: Grant Permission

1. The development shall be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ( as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2. The development shall be undertaken in strict accordance with the approved documents for this Planning Permission which comprise:

1. the submitted planning application form, received 20th March 2019;
2. the Block \& Location Plans (drawing ref P100) received 20th March 2019;
3. the Existing Site Plan (drawing ref E0011 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
4. the Existing Ground Floor Plan (drawing ref E0001 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
5. the Existing Roof Plan (drawing ref E0004 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
6. the Existing West Elevation (drawing ref E0013 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
7. the Existing South Elevation (drawing ref E0012 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
8. the Existing North Elevation (drawing ref E0015 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
9. the Existing East Elevation (drawing ref E0014 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
10. the Proposed Ground Floor Plan (drawing ref P0001 Rev 17) received 20th March 2019;
11. the Proposed First Floor Roof Plan (drawing ref P0042 Rev 07) received 20th March 2019;
12. the Proposed East Elevation (drawing ref P0040 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
13. the Proposed North Elevation (drawing ref P0041 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
14. the Proposed South Elevation (drawing ref P0038 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
15. the Proposed West Elevation (drawing ref P0039 Rev 01) received 20th March 2019;
16. the Tree Pit Detail (drawing ref A095945-3_DT_01 Rev T1) received 20th March 2019;
17. the Landscape General Arrangement (drawing ref A095945_LA_05 Rev T4) received 21st May 2019;
18. the Tree Survey (Project no. EES19-015 20th March 2019 version No. v1) received 25th March 2019;
19. the Built Heritage Statement (March 2019) received 20th March 2019;
20. the Flood Risk \& Drainage Assessment (A095945-3 March 2019) received 20th March 2019;
21. the Flood Risk \& Drainage Assessment Appendices received 20th March 2019;
22. the Planning, Design \& Access Statement (March 2019) received 20th March 2019;
23. the Notice of Decision; and
24. any such variation as may subsequently be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To define the permission.
3. The materials (and finishes) to be used in the construction of the proposed development shall be in accordance with the details contained in the
submitted application, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure the objectives of Policies HE7 and SP6 of the Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030 are met and to ensure a satisfactory external appearance for the completed development.
4. Prior to their planting, details of the proposed trees to be planted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and these works shall be carried out as approved within six months of the completion of the development. Any trees or other plants which die or are removed within the first five years following the implementation of the landscaping scheme shall be replaced during the next planting season.

Reason: To ensure that a satisfactory landscaping scheme is prepared and to ensure compliance with Policies GI6, HE7 and SP6 of the Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030.
5. Development shall not commence until a Construction Phase Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CTMP shall include details of:

- Pre-construction road condition established by a detailed survey for accommodation works within the highways boundary conducted with a Highway Authority representative; with all post repairs carried out to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority at the applicants expense;
- Details of proposed crossings of the highway verge;
- Retained areas for vehicle parking, maneuvering, loading and unloading for their specific purpose during the development;
- cleaning of site entrances and the adjacent public highway;
- Details of proposed wheel washing facilities;
- The sheeting of all HGVs taking spoil to/from the site to prevent spillage or deposit of any materials on the highway;
- Construction vehicle routing;
- The management of junctions to and crossings of the public highway and other public rights of way/footway;
- Surface water management details during the construction phase

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.


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