



Heritage Statement

Proposed Flatted Development, 181 Union Street, Aberdeen.

Background

The property is located within a block listed Category B, incorporating 175-197 Union Street. The building dates back to 1825/33 and is a 3 storey with attic fine ashlar granite building with the overall terrace being 18 window, 4-block composition with slight variations of level and proportion, with commercial units on the ground floor.

Due to the difference in ground level between the front of the property facing onto Union Street and the rear access off Windmill Brae the area previously occupied by the main auditorium, the building has extra accommodation at the rear.

The property also enjoys a fine location on Aberdeen's premier street; Union Street and as such is within the Union Street Conservation Area.

The building was previously the Picture House Cinema from 1914, renamed the Gaumont Cinema in the 1950's, finally closing in 1973.

Later in the 1970's permission was granted for the demolition of the property through a facade retention scheme which removed the auditorium leaving only the facade of the original building. An office block of modern concrete column and slab construction was subsequently constructed behind the retained facade. These works also included the construction of a new mansard roof which replaced the original traditional roof and piended dormers.

At the same time as the facade retention scheme was being implemented the windows on the main elevations were altered. Originally they would have been 3 x windows with 8-over-8 pane sash and case at the second floor and 3 x windows with an intricate 20 pane sash window arrangement to the first floor. Until recently the upper floor offices were occupied by the NHS. The ground floor retains commercial uses with Coral Bookmakers and Merkur adult gaming.

Proposed Development

The proposed development of 15 residential units will deliver quality living accommodation at the heart of the city and contribute to the "living city" concept attracting life back to the city centre. This planning application follows the approval of 17 residential units [ref 200474/DPP and ???LBC]. The proposal for 15 residential units is specifically designed as affordable homes for and on behalf of Hillcrest Housing Association.

Development Concept

The property while retaining it's listed B status due in the main to its location within an architectural set piece has little historic or architectural merit apart from the retained facade which was the only aspect of the property retained when the original building was demolished.

In that respect the designer was faced with the situation of adapting and modifying the interior to provide apartments while at the same time ensuring that the retained facade was respected. In this respect it was necessary to ensure that particularly on the main elevation to Union Street that the majesty, proportions and solid to void relationship of windows to stonework on this elegant Georgian facade was faithfully observed. The only intervention is to the existing roof which will feature rooflights/veluxes which will ensure the proper daylighting to the apartments to the third floor.

The proposal does include for the replacement of all windows. To the main facade new single glazed sash and case timber windows will be fitted with secondary glazing behind. The secondary glazing is

required to deliver the required noise mitigation and also the thermal insulation to meet the recommendations of the NIA [Noise Impact Assessment] and the current Building Standards respectively. The design of these windows in terms of sash arrangements will replicate the original windows to this elevation. To the rear all existing windows are to be replaced. The existing aluminium sash and case windows are generally in good condition. However these windows cannot be upgraded to meet the required noise mitigation and the required thermal insulation. Secondary glazing could be fitted in the same way as the windows to Union Street but this creates simple physical issues for future occupants in opening windows. The proposal is therefore to fit new windows which will meet all requirements [noise and thermal] in a single opening sash in a aluminium frame. The building to the rear is modern so it is considered that replacement of all windows will not detract and will enhance the building when viewed from Windmill Brae.

The proposed development will deliver 15 residential units behind the retained facade such that the character and amenity of the terrace remains unaltered and the ambience and architectural language of the terrace retains its original elegance and rhythm.

Photographic Audit

As has been previously stated, the property at 181 Union Street while continuing to present as an element within a Georgian terrace, is in fact a modern concrete framed building behind a retained facade. As a result the only Georgian elements are those to be found on the retained facade, which will be retained and refurbished as necessary. Internally the building is simply a standard box construction office complex as is illustrated in the attached photographs.

Summary

The proposed redevelopment of this 70's office complex will deliver 15 residential units at the heart of the city. The "living city" is a universal move towards repopulating cities such that the life of the city extends beyond standard business hours, embrace the evening and night time economy and creates a more dynamic and animated living experience. It is important in pursuing this philosophy that the living accommodation created is to the highest standard and that every measure is introduced to ensure that these properties endure and do not over the years become latter day slums reminiscent of the old city centre where condemned sub standard and unsanitary properties provided the worst kind of city experience. In detail the proposed 15 residential units reflect the demands of affordable homes in terms of the mix of tenures and the space standards as well as meeting the requirements of Housing for Varying Needs. In meeting these exacting requirements as well as all other aspects for affordable homes and the current Building Standards will ensure these residential units will be such for a considerable time. Also, as this application is for less flats than is already approved under 200474/DPP then all aspects of amenity, daylighting etc are well met.

The proposed development is offering attractive city centre accommodation in a prime location within the shell of a fine Georgian terrace and will ensure that the building's legacy will be safeguarded and celebrated