

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Planning Committee: 6 March 2013**

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**DC12/274: Alterations to shop fronts including removal of canopies and new lighting and public realm works to improve the existing square at Mitchell Way, Alexandria by West Dunbartonshire Council.**

#### **1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1** This application has been submitted by the Council and relates to land owned by the Council. Under the approved scheme of delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1** **Grant** planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Section 9.

#### **3. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS**

- 3.1** Planning permission is sought for proposed alterations to shop fronts, removal of canopies, new lighting and public realm works to improve the existing square on Mitchell Way, Alexandria. The site is within a 1970s pedestrianised shopping area which extends from Main Street to Bank Street, within Alexandria town centre. It comprises a small public square incorporating stairs and a disabled access ramp linking Mitchell Way with Main Street. The stairs and disabled access ramp are necessary at this location due to Main Street being at a higher level than Mitchell Way.
- 3.2** The proposed works are intended to improve the appearance of the location, thus encouraging greater use of the area by shoppers and making it more attractive as a location for retailers to operate. The proposal involves the removal of the existing canopies located on the northern side of Mitchell Way and around the square adjacent to Main Street. The canopies would be replaced with a feature cornice band with integrated lighting, and the existing pilasters located throughout the shopping centre would be replaced and extended to the underside of the cornice. The cornice band would be clad with metal panels. The alterations would leave adequate space between the pilasters and under the cornice for shop signage, which would conceal new recessed roller shutters. The area of building above the cornice band would have the rainwater goods replaced, the window surrounds would be painted in a contrasting colour, window frames would be repainted and the existing render would be repaired and repainted.
- 3.3** Adjacent to Main Street, the existing steps, ramps and planters would all be replaced using a modified layout which is intended to have a less cluttered

appearance and to create an improved link between Main Street and Mitchell Way. The planters would be replaced by new trees located at the western edge of the square, with seating fronting Main Street adjacent to these. To further enhance the appearance of the square, the current extensive area of pedestrian barriers along Main Street would be revised and reduced.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1** West Dunbartonshire Council Regeneration Section supports the proposal as it is linked to the wider planned redevelopment of the Mitchell Way area and will enhance Alexandria Town Centre.
- 4.2** West Dunbartonshire Council Estates and Roads Services each have no objection to the proposal.

#### **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 5.1** None.

#### **6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

##### West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 6.1** The site lies within Alexandria town centre, where Policy RET5 states that the Council will seek to improve the environment of the town centre. Applications which contribute to improving the vitality and viability of the town centre will be supported. The proposal would enhance the town centre environment, and it is therefore considered that it would fully comply with Policy RET5.

#### **7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

##### Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

- 7.1** This document supports the provision of a mixture of uses and activities within town centres and recognises that development should integrate successfully and create links with the surrounding urban fabric. It is therefore important that town centres provide a high quality, inclusive and safe environment. Well designed public spaces and buildings can improve the health, vitality and economic potential of a town centre. Actions to support improvements in town centres and to create distinctive and successful places are encouraged and range from small scale public realm works to the assembly of larger scale development sites which aid regeneration. The proposal would result in improvements to the town centre and it is therefore consistent with the SPP.

##### Public Consultation

- 7.2** Prior to the application being submitted, local businesses, community groups and elected members were given the opportunity to view the plans, attend a presentation and ask any questions at an evening meeting in the Community Education Centre, Alexandria. The plans were also available to view in the Council's 'One Stop Shop' located within Mitchell Way. In addition, a meeting was undertaken with a representative of the local Access Panel prior to the submission of the planning application to ensure that the new design met the

needs of all users. No adverse comments were received as a result of the public consultation, and the proposal did not require to be modified.

#### Appearance and Design

- 7.3** The proposal is part of a wider regeneration of Alexandria town centre, and follows on from an initial phase of general improvements, including render repairs, re-painting, structural repairs and improvements to lighting in the rear car parks. It is one of several anticipated phases of redevelopment which it is hoped will eventually include the future redevelopment of the southern part of Mitchell Way as a new foodstore. Should the southern part of Mitchell Way be significantly redeveloped, it is likely to lead to more pedestrian use of Mitchell Way as this will be the main pedestrian route from the new development to the other town centre shops, residential areas to the west and bus stops on Main Street. It is therefore particularly desirable that its appearance is improved and the area be made more attractive to retailers.
- 7.4** The existing pedestrianised area and the shop fronts are dated and are in need of improvement. The square is rather cluttered due to the design of existing ramps and planters, some of which act as visual barriers between Mitchell Way and Main Street. The proposed design for the new square will create a more open public space and the proposed use of high quality materials would set a precedent for future developments in the vicinity. The proposal would open up the space around the square and along Mitchell Way and act as a link to encourage journeys between Mitchell Way and Main Street. The new ramp and stairs would ensure that access remains convenient for all users, and appropriate new planting and seating would enhance the amenity of the area. There would be a wall within the square which would provide space for the display of public art. The removal of the canopies would open up the street and create a sense of more space and daylight, whilst the addition of new cornicing and lighting would combine with the repairs to the units above the shops to improve the appearance of the area.
- 7.5.** The existing shop fronts and square within Mitchell Way are not attractive and the use of appropriate materials, combined with the aesthetic improvements that are proposed, would enhance the appearance of the area. The overall aim of the proposal is to improve the town centre, improve the user experience and encourage new businesses to locate in Alexandria. The proposed work would also complement any future redevelopment on the southern part of Mitchell Way.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1** This proposal seeks to carry out public realm works and renovation of building frontages which will improve the appearance of Mitchell Way and therefore benefit Alexandria town centre. The works are part of a wider regeneration of the town centre, and would contribute to future plans to redevelop the southern part of Mitchell Way. The proposal therefore accords with all relevant policies of the local plan.

## **9. CONDITIONS**

- 1. Exact details and specifications of all proposed external materials, including metal cladding panels, render and roller shutters shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved.**
- 2. Exact details and specifications of all ground surfaces, bins, seating, external lighting, railings and walls shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved.**
- 3. Notwithstanding the approved plans, final landscaping details to include the number, siting and type of trees to be planted shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented as approved.**

### **Informatives**

- 1. The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.**
- 2. The developer shall submit to the Planning Authority in writing upon the forms specified for the purpose and attached to this Decision notice:**
  - a) A Notice of Commencement of Development as soon as practicable once it is decided to commence the development hereby approved (which shall be prior to the development commencing);**
  - b) A Notice of Completion of Development as soon as practicable once the development has been completed.**
- 3. This grant of planning permission does not authorise the installation of any illuminated fascia signs which would require the submission of a separate application for advertisement consent.**
- 4. The plans referred to as part of this decision are: Drawing No(s). A200, A300, A301, A500, A501, A502, A503, A504, A505, A506, A507, A508 & A509.**

**Elaine Melrose**  
**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**  
**Date: 15 February 2013**

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**Appendix:** None.

**Background Papers:** 1. Application forms and plans  
2. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010  
3. Consultation responses

**Wards affected:** Ward 2 (Leven)