

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration

Planning Committee: 27 November 2013

Subject: DC13/023: Sub-division of existing building into smaller units, internal and external alterations at 2 Sylvania Way South, Clydebank by Clydebank Co-operative Society Limited.

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To advise the Committee of discussions with Historic Scotland following the consideration of this application at 5 June Planning Committee meeting, and to enable the Committee to consider the matter in the light of Historic Scotland's advice.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** That the Committee indicate that it is **Minded to Grant** listed building consent subject to the conditions recommended in the previous report (included as Appendix 1) and to the following additional condition, and delegate authority to issue the decision to the Planning and Building Standards Manager subject to the conclusion of formal notification procedures with Historic Scotland.

Additional Condition

5. Prior to work commencing on site, a Method Statement for the subdivision of the atrium shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This statement shall detail the method of construction and impact on existing fixtures, and shall also include details of what works would be necessary to remove the subdivision and reinstate the atrium to its original condition in the future should this ever be necessary.

3. Background

- 3.1** Applications for planning permission (DC13/024) and listed building consent (DC13/023) for the subdivision and change of use of the Clydebank Co-operative Society department store building were considered by the Planning Committee on 5 June 2013. The Committee agreed to grant planning permission and this permission has now been issued. This present report relates only to the listed building consent application (DC13/023).
- 3.2** The listed building consent application involves subdivision of the building to separate the proposed public house unit on the ground and first floors from the proposed office space on the second and third floors, all of which are currently connected by a full height atrium topped by a glazed cupola. The application sought to divide the atrium horizontally (by building a floor across

the atrium at second floor level). However, the Planning Committee expressed concern about the loss of the full height of the atrium and agreed to impose a condition on the listed building consent specifying that the atrium should be divided vertically (by way of a wall surrounding the atrium at its upper levels).

- 3.3** In accordance with the statutory provisions, officers formally notified Historic Scotland of the Committee's decision. The agent was also requested to provide further details on how the vertical walling around the atrium might be achieved. Following a response from Historic Scotland indicating concerns about the proposed condition, a meeting was held between officers and Historic Scotland representatives to consider options for the atrium which would best preserve the building's architectural features and secure its long term future.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** As acknowledged by all parties, the atrium is a very important feature of the building and the ideal scenario would be its retention in its original condition. However, all parties have also recognised that there is very little prospect of finding a single occupier for all four floors of the Co-op building, and therefore some form of division of the atrium will be necessary if the building is to be brought back into use. Historic Scotland had therefore supported the applicant's original plan to divide the atrium horizontally by flooring across it at second floor level. With regard to the alternative vertical division which was proposed by the Committee, Historic Scotland would support such an arrangement only if it could be achieved using glass partitions which preserve the open character of the upper part of the light well and allow all of the surviving balcony railings to be retained.
- 4.2** The option of using a glazed screen around the atrium was therefore discussed with the applicant. Whilst a solution using glazed vertical partitions may be technically possible, the applicant has indicated that unfortunately it would not be viable economically. The purpose of the partition would be to create appropriate separation of units in order to meet building and fire regulations so the glazing would have to use special fire resistant glass which is extremely expensive. As an example of costs, one of the leading brands of fire resistant glass is advertised at £200-£350 per flat 0.3m² pane depending on specification and quantity. If a glazed screen of this material was formed tightly around the atrium the purchase of the glass alone would cost approximately £1.1 to £1.9 million at these prices. If curved glass was specified (as would be highly desirable) this would require to be specially made to the correct curvature and would therefore cost even more. If the glazed screen was pulled back to form a box around the supporting columns this would allow flat glass to be used but would significantly increase the surface area and thus the quantity of glass needed. It is therefore considered that whilst the use of a glazed screen would be highly desirable, the cost of doing so would be prohibitively expensive and would make the conversion of the building unviable.

- 4.3** The possibility of forming a solid vertical partition around the atrium was therefore discussed, as this would preserve the full height of the atrium at more manageable expense. Historic Scotland have indicated that whilst it is difficult for them to comment on such a proposal without detailed designs, they have concerns about the principle of creating of solid walls around the edge of the atrium opening, even if such walls were set back from the atrium and preserved the balcony railings. Whilst recognising that such an arrangement would preserve the full height of the light well and would allow the cupola to be seen from the lower floors, Historic Scotland consider that overall it would be likely to seriously detract from the character of the light well by creating an unsatisfactory void only visible from the lower floor levels, and undermining the purpose of retaining the original balcony railings on the upper levels.
- 4.4** Historic Scotland therefore consider that the original proposal involving the insertion of a floor at 2nd floor level and the retention of balconies at 1st and 3rd floor levels represents the most satisfactory and realistic compromise. Whilst the lower floors would lose the natural light from the skylight this could to some extent be offset by suitably high quality feature lighting within the atrium space, and the upper floors would continue to benefit from the central skylight. In addition, it is possible that the works to insert a floor could be carried out with less disruption to the other interior features of the building, and would be readily reversible should a future use allow all four floors to revert to a single occupier. Historic Scotland has therefore respectfully requested that the Council reconsider the matter in the light of this advice.
- 4.5** Therefore, in order to best secure the re-use of the building, it is recommended that the condition requiring vertical subdivision around the atrium be removed, and that listed building consent be granted on the basis of horizontal separation at second floor level as recommended by the original report (Appendix 1). It is however recommended that a further condition is attached to the listed building consent which addresses specifically the detailed design of the horizontal segregation and its relationship with the balconies to be submitted for approval. In terms of the design, consideration will be given to ensure that any design proposal is reversible in the future. This option would have the support of Historic Scotland and would give the applicant a more viable economic solution to subdividing the listed building in a manner which would achieve adequate fire separation and would be capable of being reversed in the future if need be. The Council's statutory notification of Historic Scotland has been withdrawn pending the outcome of the Committee's reconsideration, and the application will therefore require to be notified to Historic Scotland again before a decision may be issued.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1** There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There are no known risks associated with this report.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 No issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this measure.

9. Consultation

9.1 Consultations with Historic Scotland are discussed in Section 4 above.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 An assessment of the conversion of the Co-op building has been carried out on the proposal in respect of the Council's five main strategic priorities for 2012 – 2017. It is likely that it would improve economic growth and employability in the area through bringing a redundant listed building into re-use.

Richard Cairns

Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration

Date: 12 November 2013

Person to Contact:	Pamela Clifford, Planning & Building Standards Manager, Housing, Environmental and Economic Development, Council Offices, Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG
Appendices:	1. Planning Committee Report DC13/023 & DC13/024
Background Papers:	None
Wards Affected:	Ward 5 (Clydebank Central)