

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration****Planning Committee: 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

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**Subject: Dumbuck Hotel, Dumbarton****1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of a decision by Historic Environment Scotland to remove the listed building status from the Dumbuck Hotel, Dumbarton.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note this report and agrees to the actions detailed in paragraph 4.9 of the report.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Dumbuck Hotel on Glasgow Road, Dumbarton is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century two-storey and attic former mansion house that was converted into a hotel in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was built for the Geils family sometime between 1814 and 1829 (with one record suggesting 1824). The building has been remodelled and extended throughout its existence. The building was listed as a category B listed building on 14 May 1971.

**4. Main Issues**

- 4.1 Historic Environment Scotland received an application to remove the listed building designation from the Dumbuck Hotel on 20 September 2022. The key points of the application can be summarised as:
- There is no possibility of future reuse due to the current economic climate.
  - The fabric of the property is now in a poor state and will worsen through time.
  - The property has been extended and altered internally with many original features including the simple front porch having been removed.
- 4.2 Following receipt of the application and during its evidence gathering stage, Historic Environment Scotland contacted the Council for its views. The Council stated its strong opposition to the removal of the listing. At this stage Dumbarton East and Central Community Council also noted its concern, and three individuals also submitted their objection to its delisting.

- 4.3** Following its evidence gathering stage, Historic Environment Scotland proposed to remove the listed building designation from the Dumbuck Hotel and formally consulted on this. The Council received direct notification of the consultation, and local press raised awareness of it in the local community. Historic Environment Scotland received ninety-four written comments on the consultation, ninety-three from individuals and one from West Dunbartonshire Council. Ninety-two of the comments were objections to the proposed delisting of the Dumbuck Hotel, and two were in support. The Council submitted a detailed heritage statement prepared by consultants in support of its objection. This made reference to: the design features of the building, and how many of these features are retained; the positive contribution the building makes to streetscape and landscape, and its role as a landmark building; the building's association with people and events of national importance; and the buildings value to the local community, particularly as a venue for many life events e.g. marriages.
- 4.4** Historic Environment Scotland's decision on the delisting issues was issued on 24 October 2023 and advised that the Dumbuck Hotel has been removed from the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest i.e. that it has been delisted. Its Report of Handling is attached as Appendix 1. In reaching its decision, Historic Environment Scotland noted:
- The building has been altered to such an extent that it has lost a significant amount on its early 19<sup>th</sup> century historic features, and this has affected its interest in listing terms.
  - The Dumbuck Hotel is not a rare survival for its building type and date....changes have lessened the building's historic character and authenticity
  - Association with the Geils family and the Kosmoid fraud are not considered to be of national importance. (The Kosmoid fraud dates from the early 1900s and related to the transmutation of other metals into gold. Many prominent people of the time invested in Kosmoid Ltd).
- 4.5** In its summary of assessment, Historic Environment Scotland concludes that the Dumbuck Hotel no longer meets the criteria of special architectural or historic interest for the following reasons:
- It has lost much of its historic character - while the principal elevation retains some elements of its modest, classical style, the rest of the building has been substantially altered both externally and internally.
  - It does not demonstrate special design quality for its date and building type.
  - It is not an early or rare example of a classical style mansion, which is a common building type.
- 4.6** There is no right of appeal regarding a decision to remove listed status from a building.

#### Effect of decision

- 4.7** The Historic Environment Scotland decision is effective immediately and therefore the Dumbuck Hotel no longer has listed building status from 24 October 2023. In effect this means that neither planning permission nor listed building consent is required for demolition of the building. Alterations to the physical appearance of the building, internal or external, would not need listed building consent. Planning permission would still be required for any change of use of the building and any new development on the site.
- 4.8** There are a number of live applications for planning permission and listed building consent relating to the building, including different proposals for change of use to flats and holiday lets. The applicant will be contacted to determine if they still want to take these forward. A building warrant has also been submitted for the demolition of the building. The assessment of a building warrant to demolish the hotel would only consider technical aspects of the demolition (e.g. the method statement) and would not assess the principle of whether demolition is acceptable or not. A decision on the building warrant would not normally come before Planning Committee and it is not subject to consultation.
- 4.9** The decision by Historic Environment Scotland is extremely disappointing, especially given the objections to delisting submitted by the Council and 92 private individuals, which strongly demonstrates local feeling that the building should remain listed, reflecting the age and rarity of this type of building in West Dunbartonshire and that it is building of local historic and community interest. The Dumbuck Hotel is an important landmark building, located on the main route into and out of Dumbarton. For many, this road is a popular walking/running route, and the Hotel building indicates the start and close proximity of the residential part of the town, and nearing your destination. The building signals Dumbarton's historic past, and it is some distance into the town before there is another building of its age or older and of similar architectural and local interest. The building is therefore a great significance to the sense of place, both in its immediate surroundings and the town as a whole. This local significance and local opinions appear not to have been given much weight by Historic Environment Scotland in its assessment. It is accepted that the building may not be of national importance but it is of local importance to the area, and it is considered that a change to category C listed building would have been a far more appropriate change to have made than delisting entirely. It is therefore recommended that the Convenor of Planning writes to Christina McKelvie, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, and the Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager writes to Chief Executive of Historic Environment Scotland Mr Alex Paterson expressing the disappointment at the decision and how local interest and opinions appear to have been overlooked.

## **5. People Implications**

5.1 There are no people implications associated with this report.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

6.1 There are no financial or procurement implications associated with this report.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

7.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

8.1 This report does not introduce a new policy and therefore does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

## **9. Consultation**

9.1 Historic Environment Scotland undertook consultation as part of its consideration of this matter.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

10.1 The strategic priority of Our Communities – Resilient and Thriving includes a success measure relating to cultural and historical heritage being enjoyed and conserved.

**Pamela Clifford**

**Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager**

**Date: 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

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**Person to Contact:** Pamela Clifford, Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager  
[pamela.clifford@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:pamela.clifford@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

Alan Williamson, Development Planning & Place Team Leader  
[alan.williamson@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:alan.williamson@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendix:** Historic Environment Scotland Report of Handling

**Background Papers:** Historic Environment Scotland portal - <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/decision/500003621>

**Wards Affected:** Dumbarton