

Speaking for Scotland's Buildings



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The Planning Officer
South Ayrshire Council
Wellington Square
Ayr
KA7 1DR

APPLICATION : 20/01075/CON. Demolition of existing building, 8 High Street, Ayr, South Ayrshire, KA7 1PA.

This response follows our previous objection from May 2020. Our concerns as set out in that letter remain.

The South Ayrshire Local Development Plan for the Historic Environment. LDP policy states 'We will support development proposals if we believe the quality and design of the proposed development will protect, conserve or improve them. ...All new development in a conservation area has to improve or preserve the area's character or appearance.'

In that response we noted several concerns and observations. These included :

- *The first concern of the AHSS is the proposed demolition of 8-10 High Street which, despite its sad condition, can be restored to make a significant contribution to the scene once it is given the handsome appearance still apparent on similar buildings round the corner in New Bridge Street. The whole project seems to ignore the greater context inclusive of the important streetscape along New Bridge Street with which the aforementioned work together as a pivot point at the corner. Removing 8-10 High Street would reduce this potential greatly and reduce the buildings up to the bridge to even more of a soulless back façade when seen from the site.*
- *The narrow medieval character of the High Street will be permanently eroded if too large a gap is left for the square. The present empty site already demonstrates how important it is to get this aspect right. To remove another building will make it worse.*

What worries us most is that the historic town centre of Ayr is being eroded in a manner that is detrimental to the remaining buildings that together make up the fabric of the texture and streetscape. A well founded principle is that any demolition needs to be averted until the applicant can prove that the replacement is an improvement.

Resolution remains lacking for several important considerations. Our previous comments highlighted some of these and neither the "Ayr Riverside – Booklet 1 Design Proposals" nor the current "Design & Access Statement providing background information in support of the

Conservation Area Consent Application” resolve them. Although the diagrams in 5.0 EMERGING SITE STRATEGY do begin to consider the greater impact in terms of through linkages, they do not consider the visual impact onto it and beyond nor the way the High Street is an environment in its own right which this application will have great impact on.

- The interface between the town hall and the new open space has not been addressed. The town hall is the main reference point for all new interventions, particularly spatially. That side of the street also includes listed commercial buildings. If the design is handled more holistically, then both the riverside square and the town hall along with the rest of the High Street would be enhanced. This can be done either by inclusive design where it is all treated as one square or with the strengthening of the streetscape delineation through which visual linkages could be provided. This option would enable a stronger sense of place within the square.
- The open corner site is not even within the site and receives little acknowledgement in the proposals. It is itself the result of demolition. It only works because it is contained by the buildings on each side. It also serves as a pivot point spatially between the High Street and New Bridge Street. In terms of urban design this is a negative space punctured into the streetscape. This definition and role of pivot are currently retained on the High Street side only by number 8. If number 8 is demolished that would leave an awkward spatial arrangement. If it is demolished, it needs to be replaced by something better (solid or open) and that pivots around the corner into New Bridge Street. In other words the corner site and number 8 should be considered together.
- The streetscape along New Bridge Street from the corner site to the river are listed and recognised as of value to this new square, BUT there is as yet no indication of how their rear facades inclusive of service areas are to be addressed. They are currently shown simply diagrammatically. The new square is shown as very large and greatly subdivided by hard and soft landscaping. Using 8 High Street as a reference point, there may be an option to develop this end of the square with buildings (such as restaurants, cafes and boutiques) that back the New Bridge Street buildings and face the square. There could be service space to the rear, mirroring that of New Bridge Street.

We therefore object to the current proposals to demolish number 8 High Street.

Yours faithfully,



Iain Wotherspoon.
Chairman. Cases Panel. Strathclyde Group.