

Speaking for Scotland's Buildings



This comment was submitted by the AHSS Highlands & Islands Cases Panel via an online planning portal

Council: Fife

Application reference: 20/03120/LBC

Address: 55 High Street, Dunfermline

Date AHSS comment submitted: 4th March 2021

The AHSS Forth and Borders Cases Panel has concerns about some of the proposed works.

This is a late 17th century structure, located on the High Street within the Dunfermline conservation area. The building is a prime example of early commercial development in the town and, although much altered, still illustrates the differing stages of development in the area (demonstrated in the pictures provided by the applicants). To the rear of the property, a more contemporary linking block connects the main building to a subsidiary warehouse, present in maps of the area in the mid 19th century.

Although the AHSS support the renovation and conservation of this structure, there are points of concern that the Panel would like to see addressed before works take place.

1) There seem excessive downtakings towards the rear of the property. Proposed works also impact the rear most wall of the "shop" and significantly alter the floor plan of the building. In the Conservation and Design statement, the "slightly unusual arrangements of masonry at the lower levels" (p.5) may be significant, and warrants more description and justification for its removal. We do not believe that the proposed interventions adequately respect the interest and significance of the historic interior, through excessive loss of floor plan.

2) The blocking up of windows in the rear of the property on the ground floor seems unnecessary. HES guidance states that "Permanent blocking of windows by building up the opening should only occur where the window makes very little contribution to the character of the building" (Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Windows, p.14). These windows open to the rear of the property and as such contribute to the character of the building and the area. No condition report is provided to justify the blocking up of these windows and it should be avoided.

3) Little detail is provided about the repair of the windows on the main façade of the first and second floors. The polycarbonate secondary glazing proposed is not clearly described and should not be external.

We do welcome the repair and conservation of 55 High Street, but believe that the importance of the entire structure is not consistently appreciated, and the work done should respect the varied history of this commercial premises.