

**KEY INFORMATION**

**Ward** Tay Bridges

**Proposal**

Demolition of existing and erection of new student residences, landscaping, creation of access and roads infrastructure

**Address**

Belmont Halls of Residence  
Balfour Street  
Dundee DD1 4HB

**Applicant**

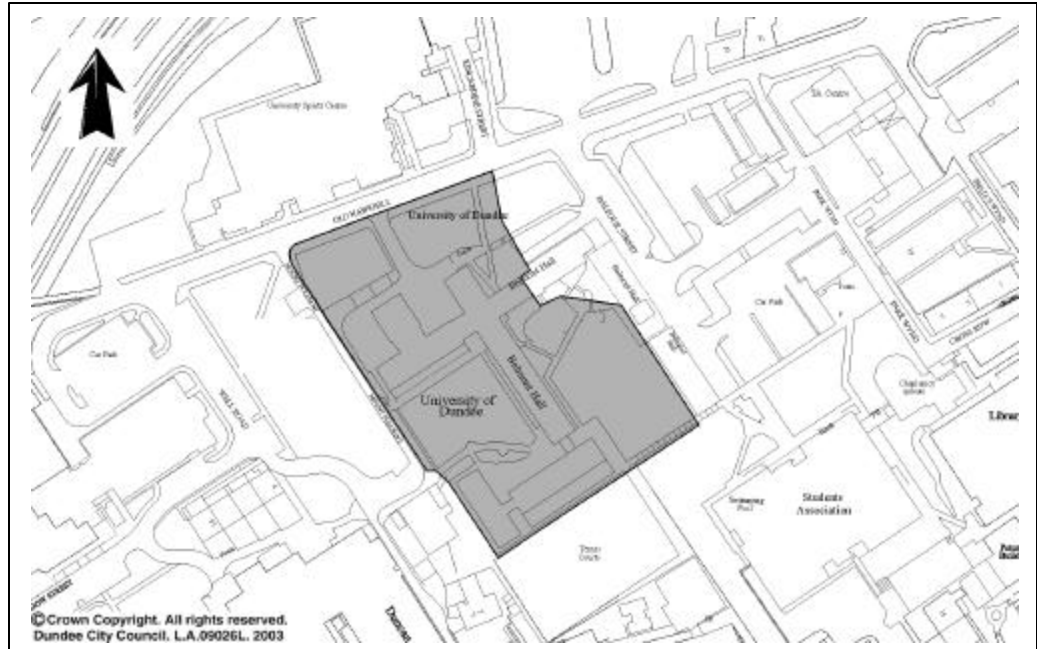
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**Registered** 28 Jan 2004

**Case Officer** D Gordon



# Student Residences Proposed in Balfour Street

The demolition of existing and erection of new student residences, landscaping, creation of access and roads infrastructure is **RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL subject to conditions**. Report by Director of Planning and Transportation

**RECOMMENDATION**

The development is considered as a positive contribution to the redevelopment of the University's campus area and one that will complement and enhance the development proposals already approved for this area. The application is recommended for **APPROVAL subject to conditions**.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- Planning permission is sought for the partial demolition of existing Halls of Residence and the erection of 340 new study bedrooms that will take the form of selfcatering flats. Associated secure cycle parking (54 spaces) and landscaping works are also proposed.
- The proposal was advertised in the local press as being contrary to the Dundee Local Plan (car parking) and also as development affecting the setting of a conservation area. No objections to the proposals have been received.
- It is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in terms of design, siting, car parking provision, and landscaping. The appearance of the proposed building will improve and enhance the visual quality of the local area and will make a positive contribution to the redevelopment of the University's campus area.
- There are no development plan policies or material considerations that would justify the refusal of this application.

## DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The proposal under consideration involves the partial demolition of the existing Belmont Halls and the erection of new residences. There are currently 278 study bedrooms within Belmont Halls (168 within blocks A, B & C and 110 within blocks G & H). Catering facilities and common rooms are located throughout blocks D, E & F. It is proposed to develop 340 new study bedrooms that shall take the form of self-catering flats. This will involve the demolition of the blocks A, B, C, D, E and F. The recently refurbished blocks G & H are to be retained. There is currently no student car parking at Belmont and this situation is proposed to remain following the proposed redevelopment. However, it is proposed to provide 54 covered and secure cycle parking spaces for the use of the students.

The proposal also involves the provision of a new reception area, laundry block and associated bin stores. The submitted plans advise of landscaping works on all four boundaries of the site and also within the private courtyard area of the new development. The southern edge of the site, that will accommodate the majority of the new landscaping, will form part of the proposed University Campus Green.

Vehicular access into the site (for service vehicles) is to be taken from Old Hawkhill to the north. There will be no further means of vehicular access into the site.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Belmont Halls of residence are located on the north side of the University campus area, immediately to the south of Old Hawkhill. The site is close to the existing campus facilities and occupies an important pedestrian thoroughfare linking the east side of the campus area with the west.

The site itself is approximately 0.8 hectares in area and slopes gently from south to north and from west to east towards the Students Association building. The Belmont site currently provides student accommodation for approximately 198 catered and 80 self-catered bedspaces with various wings

annexes and blocks. Self-catering accommodation is located within the Tower Block that was recently refurbished in line with the Campus Plan. The majority of the accommodation consists of 3 /4 storey blocks as well as a dining / communal block. In the centre of the existing complex are two open landscaped areas that create an attractive feature allowing movement from east to west - a feature that is to be replicated in the new development.

The surrounding area accommodates a number of buildings associated with the University. To the west are the Welcome Trust building and the Art College. The University sports centre is located to the north and the new Computing Building is located to the east. To the south are the University tennis courts.

The site is contained within the University Conservation Area.



## POLICY BACKGROUND

### Dundee and Angus Structure Plan 2001-2016

There are no policies relevant to the determination of this application.

### Dundee Local Plan 1998

The following policies are of relevance:

Policy EU19 - The Council will encourage appropriate business and research developments and supporting uses associated with Higher Educational Institutions in "campus" locations as identified on the Proposals Map.

Policy H10 - This offers design guidelines for new build housing. The guidelines cover such issues as amenity space / garden area provision, parking and urban design.

Policy H13 - The Council will reserve appropriate sites for residences for

students / research workers of Higher Education establishments having regard to the other policies of the Plan.

Policy BE1 - The Council will expect the highest standards of composition and design in all new developments and its careful integration with its surroundings as regards scale, form, siting, alignment, materials and landscaping.

Policy BE11 - Within conservation areas, all development proposals will be expected to complement and enhance the character of the surrounding area.

Policy BE30 - When considering development proposals involving sites where the presence of contamination is suspected, the Council will require developers to submit details of investigations to assess the nature and extent of contamination and notify the authority of the remediation measures proposed to render the site fit for the use proposed.

### Dundee Urban Nature Conservation Subject Local Plan 1995

There are no policies relevant to the determination of this application.

### Finalised Dundee Local Plan Review

The following policies are of relevance:

Policy 4 - Design of New Housing. The design and layout of all new housing in the city should be of a high quality. As a basis for achieving this, new development will be required to conform to the Design Standards contained within the Plan.

Policy 9 - Student Housing. Sites identified on the Proposals Map are considered appropriate for the development of student housing. In addition, student housing proposals on sites within 15 minutes walking distance of the Universities will be supported where this is in accordance with other Local Plan policies. A Section 75 Legal Agreement will be required to restrict occupancy to students. Given the prominent location of many sites close to the

City's universities, it is important that development proposals are of a very high quality design. As a general rule car parking should be provided at a ratio of 25% of bedspaces although this may be reduced in highly accessible central locations. Secure cycle storage facilities should be included in all proposals.

Policy 28 - Higher Education Development. The Council will support further higher education development generally and particularly in association with relevant business and research expansion. In order to ensure compatibility with the Local Plan, 'Campus Development Plans' will require to be produced in liaison with the Council for the development of these Institutes.

Policy 29 - Major Institution Masterplans. The Council supports the development of appropriately detailed Masterplans to provide a strategic context for the consideration of individual development proposals within sites indicated on the Proposals Map. It is expected that these Masterplans would be approved by the Council and would form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Policy 79 - Contaminated Land. When considering development proposals involving sites where the presence of contamination is suspected, the Council will require the applicants to submit the results of an investigation that assesses the nature and extent of contamination and the proposed remediation measures to render the site fit for the use proposed.

## Scottish Planning Policies, Planning Advice Notes and Circulars

The following are of relevance:

National Planning Policy Guideline 18 - Planning and the Historic Environment.

Planning Advice Note 67 - Housing Quality.

Designing Places - A Policy Statement for Scotland.

## Non Statutory Statements of Council Policy

The following policy statements are of relevance:

Dundee - The Urban Design Guide. This sets out objectives that are to be pursued in the design of new buildings and spaces within the city.

Also of relevance is the Dundee University Campus Plan that has been approved by the Council and which is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

## LOCAL AGENDA 21

The development will result in the redevelopment of a brownfield inner city site and is therefore considered to be sustainable and consequently consistent with the aims of Local Agenda 21.

## SITE HISTORY

There is no recent history of planning applications that are of direct relevance to the application under consideration.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The statutory neighbour notification procedure has been undertaken by the applicants. In addition, the development was advertised in the local press as Development Affecting the Setting of a Conservation Area and as a Bad Neighbour Development (the building is over 20 metres in height). The proposal was also advertised as being potentially contrary to Policy H10 of the Dundee Local Plan 1998 (car parking provision). No objections to the proposal have been received from members of the public.

## CONSULTATIONS

The relevant Council Departments and outside bodies have been consulted with regard to the proposals. The following comments have been received.

The Councils Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards has advised that due to the historical land use of the site (use as a mill), it has been requested that a Site Investigation Report be forwarded for a review. It is further recommended that an

appropriate condition relating to potential contamination be attached to any permission granted.

## OBSERVATIONS

In accordance with the provisions of Section 25 of the Act the Committee is required to consider:

- a whether the proposals are consistent with the provisions of the development plan; and if not
- b whether an exception to the provisions of the development plan is justified by other material considerations.

## The Development Plan

The provisions of the development plan relevant to the determination of this application are specified in the Policy background section above.

The proposed development under consideration is one of a series of proposals being progressed as part of the Dundee Student Villages Project - a major outsourcing project that seeks to build, own and operate all of the University's student residence provision for the next 35 years. The principal aim of the project is to provide new and refurbished residences that are of a quality and standard that meets and exceeds standards in the higher education sector, and which will assist the University in attracting students, and associated funding through the provision of appropriate support facilities. It is also intended to provide a guarantee of University provided accommodation for all undergraduate first year and post-graduate overseas students. This equates to approximately 1800 bedspaces. The University wishes to increase the proportion of self-catered and en-suite accommodation to satisfy student demand and for vocational lettings. The University also wants to guarantee that suitable accommodation, of a comparable standard to other Universities, can be provided close to the University campus. At present the University advise that their residence provision fail to meet these undertakings on a regular basis.

The proposal under consideration, which forms an early phase of the above Dundee Student Villages Project, involves the partial demolition of the existing Belmont Halls and the

erection of new residences. There are currently 278 study bedrooms within Belmont Halls (168 within blocks A, B, & C and 110 within blocks G & H). It is proposed to develop 340 new study bedrooms that shall take the form of self-catering flats. This will involve the demolition of the blocks A, B, C, D, E & F. The recently refurbished G & H are to be retained.

With regard to the design of the new building, the U-shaped form of the proposal contains a central courtyard faced by the existing Belmont Tower. The buildings are to be 6 storey's high to the north and 4 storey to the south (fronting onto the Campus Green). The residences are entered from the courtyard.

The south wing is penetrated by a two storey high pedestrian pend, providing access from the courtyard to the Campus Green. This pend coincides with a level change and helps to resolve the step in the building roofline. The north eastern gable will be designed to respond the entrance area of Heathfield but will be designed in such a way that the completion of the courtyard by a redevelopment of Belmont Tower will be achievable.

The proposed finishing materials to be used will be contemporary in nature based on projecting metal roofs, wall finishes of masonry, smooth render, timber and glass and detailing of galvanised steel and timber. The use of recycled materials will be developed, particularly in the courtyard area. It is intended that the materials palette will vary between the external street elevations of the building and the internal courtyard elevations. The street will be developed in more muted colours with small areas of strong colour with the courtyard having a richer mix of both coloured and natural materials. As a direct response to both its south facing aspect and the future presence of the Campus Green, the southern elevation has substantial areas of timber cladding.

The proposals have been developed over a number of months through the progression of designs in conjunction with representatives of Dundee Student Villages and this Council. It is considered that the scale, massing, materials and appearance of the new building are in accordance with the design principles originally agreed for

the development of this site. The development will provide a high quality building that will make a positive contribution to the environmental improvement of the local area.

Vehicular access into the site (for service / emergency vehicles) is to be taken from Old Hawkhill to the north. The site is located at the heart of the University Campus within easy walking distance of the faculties on the Campus, the Student Association, as well as the city centre, which is a 10 minute walk away. In light of this central location, it is not intended to provide any associated off street student car parking in this instance. This is in line with the Campus Plan that aims to reduce the prominence of cars within the Campus area and consequently, the applicants propose to retain the existing parking situation with no student parking proposed. This fails to meet the space per unit ratio required by Policy H10 of the Dundee Local Plan ie 25% of number of bedspaces. However, in light of the above locational issues and the stated intention of the University to create a Campus area not dominated by cars, it is considered that the retention of the status quo of no associated parking being provided is acceptable in this particular instance.

In terms of cycle provision, it is proposed that 54 secure and covered cycle parking spaces will be provided for the use of the students within the accommodation.

With regard to the proposed landscaping works, the south side of the site forms part of the University Campus Green proposal and consequently, will be completed to a standard that complements and enhances the quality of this important future green 'lung' of the campus. In addition, substantial planting is to be provided within the courtyard area of the site and the walls of the demolished buildings may well be reused as landscape features.

The site has been identified as being potentially contaminated. This may require remedial measures to address the environmental issues and feasibility of developing the site. It is intended to attach a condition to any permission granted requiring appropriate remediation works to be

carried out prior to the first occupation of the new residences.

It is concluded from the foregoing that the proposal, by virtue of the proposed car parking provision does not comply with the requirements of the development plan.

## Other Material Considerations

The other material considerations to be taken into account are as follows:

It is considered that the terms of Policy 4 (Design of New Housing) and Policy 79 (Contaminated Land) have been discussed and discharged above. In addition, it is also considered that the requirements of Policy 28 (Higher Education Development) and Policy 29 (Major Institution Masterplans) are fully met by the proposed details the subject of this application.

With regard to Policy 9 (Student Housing), the applicants have been in discussion with this Council on the future occupancy of the new residences. It has now been agreed that the residences the subject of this application shall be occupied only by students of the University of Dundee, of other universities other than the University of Dundee and of other higher educational establishments. It has also been agreed that the temporary occupancy of the halls for conferences, holiday lets etc., shall be limited to periods outwith the University of Dundee's semester / term dates. In this respect, it is considered that the requirement for a Section 75 Agreement restricting the occupancy of the new residences to students only should be set aside in this instance and that the control over this agreed restriction be achieved through the use of appropriate planning conditions attached to any permissions granted.

With regard to the provision of cycle parking only and no off street car parking, Policy 9 advises that, as a general rule, parking should be provided at a ratio of 25% of bedspaces although this may be reduced in highly accessible central locations. Due to the proximity of the site to the campus area, the student union and the city centre, it is considered that the provision of no associated off street spaces, in this instance, is in accordance with the provisions of Policy 9.

It is concluded from the foregoing that sufficient weight can be accorded to the relevant material considerations such as to justify the grant of planning permission contrary to the provisions of the development plan. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted with conditions.

## Design

The proposed development is similar to that suggested in the University Campus Plan with the provision of a strong simple 'anchor block' to act as a unifying element amongst the various forms of the surrounding buildings. The eventual redevelopment of the Belmont Tower and attached blocks will provide the opportunity to complete the urban block and provide a façade to address the adjacent buildings.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of the development proposals are to create high quality student residences to contribute to the Dundee Student Villages project that will provide new and refurbished accommodation for the purposes of University of Dundee students for the next 35 years. The current residence accommodation on the Belmont site is no longer considered appropriate to meet modern day student requirements. The demolition and construction of new residence blocks will serve to improve the amenity and environment of the general area and contribute to the implementation of the development objectives as outlined in the approved University's Campus Plan.

The principle of a development of this nature has been established by the current use and the indicative built form as outlined in the Campus Plan. The proposal is also supported through the land use policies of the adopted and Finalised Review Local Plans.

The development is considered to be a positive contribution to the redevelopment of the University's campus and one that will complement the series of development proposals already being progressed by the University in this area.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within five years from the date of this permission.
- 2 Samples of the finishing materials proposed to be used shall be submitted to the Council for approval and if approved the development shall be carried out only in accordance with such approved samples.
- 3 During the academic year the student accommodation shall be used and occupied only by students enrolled in and undertaking a course of full time study at the University of Dundee, of other universities other than the University of Dundee and of other higher or further educational establishments. At any time outwith the University of Dundee's semester / term time dates, the accommodation shall be occupied only by business, conference or recreational visitor to the City of Dundee in association with business, educational, conference or tourist events and for no other purpose whatsoever.
- 4 Development shall not begin until details of a scheme for landscaping works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. For the avoidance of doubt, details of the scheme shall include:
  - a location of new trees, shrubs, hedges and grassed areas;
  - b existing and finished ground levels in relation to a fixed datum preferably ordnance;
  - c schedule of plants to comprise species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/density;
  - d programme for completion and subsequent maintenance.

- 5 Development shall not begin until a scheme to deal with any contamination on the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall contain details of proposals to deal with any contamination to include:
  - a the nature, extent and type(s) of contamination on the site;
  - b measures to treat/remove any contamination to ensure the site is fit for the use proposed;
  - c measures to deal with any contamination during construction works;
  - d condition of the site on completion of decontamination measures.

Before the site is occupied, the measures to decontaminate the site shall be fully implemented as approved by the planning authority.

## Reasons

- 1 To comply with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
- 2 To ensure that the proposed development has a satisfactory external appearance in the interests of the visual amenities of the area.
- 3 In order to ensure that the use of the new residences is restricted to students of higher institutions only and that the use of the property outwith semester/term times is restricted to appropriate alternative uses.
- 4 To ensure that the proposed development has a satisfactory external appearance in the interests of the visual amenities of the area.
- 5 In order to ensure that the site is fit for the use proposed.