

Complete Demolition of West Park Conference Centre

KEY INFORMATION

Ward West End

Address

West Park Conference Centre

319 Perth Road

Dundee

Applicant

Dundee Student Villages

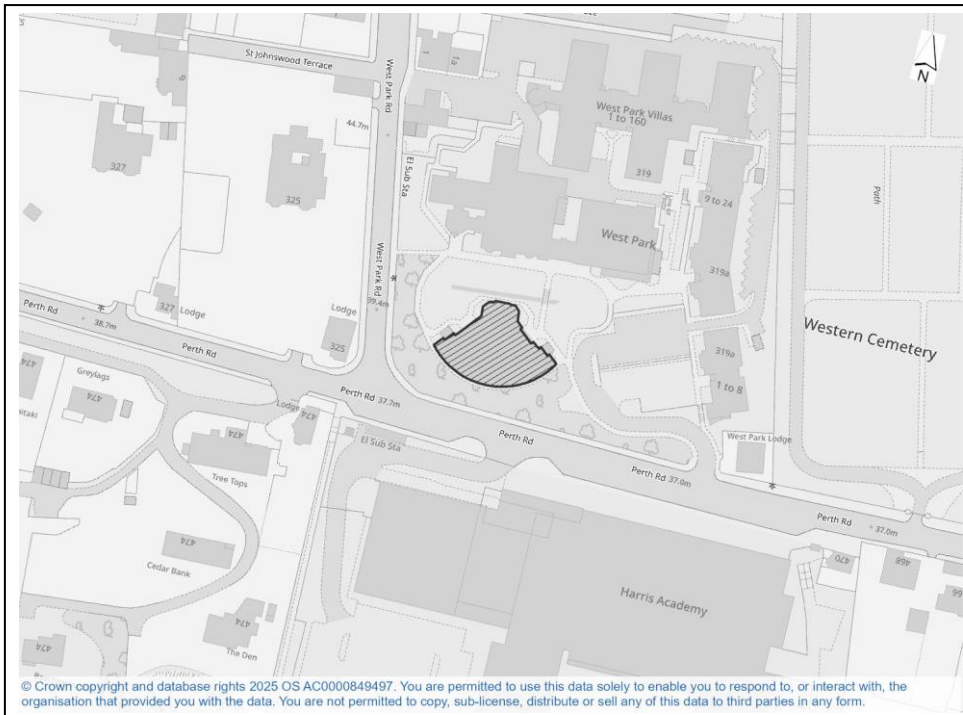
Agent

Mark Alexander Brown Ltd

Validated: 11 Dec 2024

**Report by Head of Planning
& Economic Development**

Contact: Amy Russell



SUMMARY OF REPORT

- Conservation Area Consent is sought for the demolition of the unlisted West Park Conference Centre at 319 Perth Road.
- The application is in accordance with the Development Plan.
- The application was advertised in the local press and a site notice was displayed at the site. One letter of objection was received.
- Supporting information included a planning statement and a structural report.
- In accordance with Dundee City Council's scheme of delegation, this application is to be determined by the Planning Committee due to an elected member request.
- More details can be found at [24/00786/CON | Complete demolition of West Park Conference Centre | West Park Conference Centre 319 Perth Road Dundee DD2 1NN](#)

RECOMMENDATION

The proposal satisfies the duty imposed under Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and is in accordance with the Development Plan. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight to justify refusal of conservation area consent. It is therefore recommended that Conservation Area Consent be **APPROVED** subject to conditions.

1 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The application seeks Conservation Area Consent for the complete demolition of West Park Conference Centre, located at 319 Perth Road. The building is unlisted and is situated within the West End Suburbs Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The conference centre has been permanently closed since March 2020. The applicant has submitted a structural report which highlights the building is in a deteriorating condition with major structural issues to the timber roof structure and exterior brickwork. The supporting statement outlines that the cost of repairs compared with the underlying value of the building as a conference centre/auditorium mean that it is unviable to undertake the necessary repairs.
- 1.3 It is therefore proposed to demolish the building in its entirety. There are currently no proposals to redevelop the site.
- 1.4 The applicant has submitted the following in support of the application:
 - Structural Report; and
 - Planning Statement.

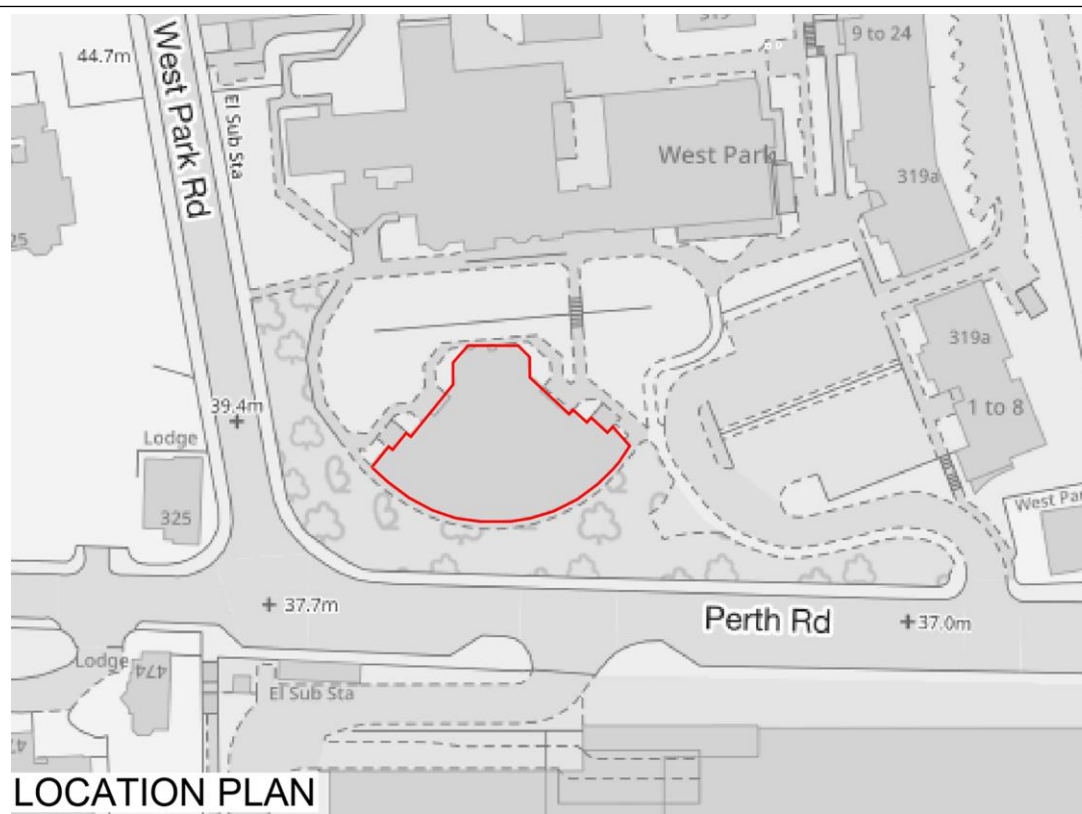


Figure 1 – Existing Site Plan

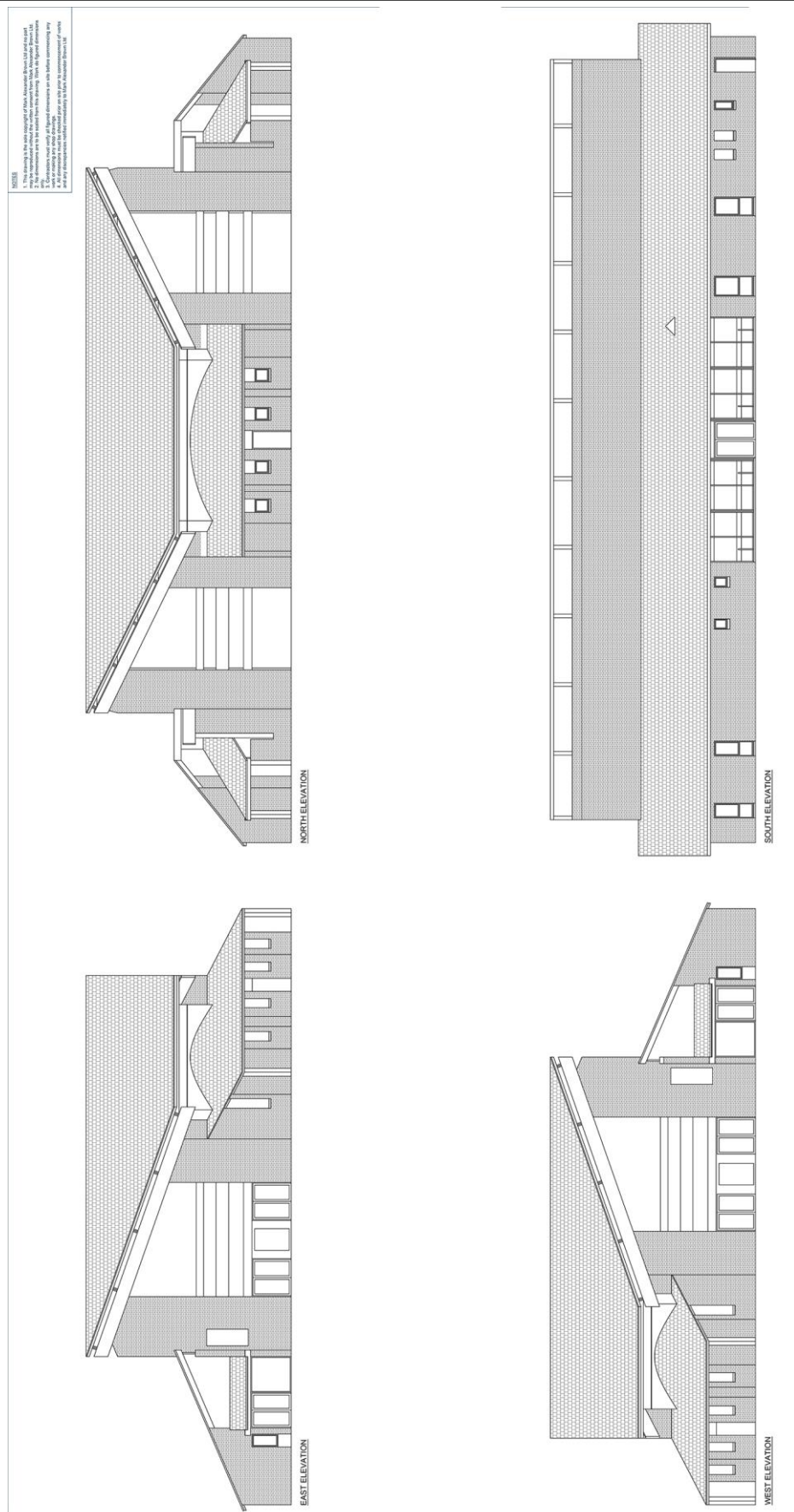


Figure 2 – Existing Elevations

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site forms part of the wider Sanctuary Students West Park site at 319 Perth Road, which comprises student accommodation, open space and associated car parking. The building is of modern construction, is detached and relatively well enclosed to the east, south and west by mature trees and landscaping.
- 2.2 The building is finished with brick masonry and glazing with mono pitched slate roofs. The site is bound to the north and east by student accommodation which includes a category B listed building (West Park Hall and lodge). To the south, beyond the listed boundary wall is Perth Road and directly across sits Harris Academy. The site is bound to the west by West Park Road, on the opposite side of which is the category B listed Elmslea House and lodge.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is a mixture of residential including student accommodation and educational uses.



Figure 3 – View from Perth Road Looking North



Figure 4 – View From West Park Road Looking East



Figure 5 – View of Existing Building

3 POLICY BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The following plans and policies are considered to be of direct relevance:

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4

Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places

Policy 9: Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

DUNDEE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2019

Policy 50: Demolition of Listed Buildings and Buildings in Conservation Area

STATUTORY PLANNING POLICY

- 3.2 Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (2019)

NON-STATUTORY STATEMENTS OF POLICY

- 3.3 West End Suburbs Conservation Area Appraisal

- 3.4 There are no other plans, policies and non-statutory statements that are considered to be of direct relevance.

4 SITE HISTORY

- 4.1 No recent planning history of relevance to this application.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 5.1 There is no statutory neighbour notification requirement for a conservation area consent however the application advertised in the local press and a site notice was displayed at the site.
- 5.2 One objection has been received raising the following valid material grounds:
- the Conference Centre is one of Dundee's most significant buildings of the late 20th Century, and it should not be demolished without every effort being made to restore it;
 - the application fails to comply with criteria set out in Historic Environment Scotland guidance to justify its demolition;
 - no evidence of previously marketing the building or assessment of costs of repairs; and

6 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 **Historic Environment Scotland** has no comment to make on the proposal.

7 DETERMINING ISSUES

- 7.1 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that a building in a Conservation Area shall not be demolished without the consent of the appropriate authority (in this case the planning authority).
- 7.2 In accordance with the provisions of Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, special regard must be given to the effects of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This statutory duty should always be borne in mind when considering demolition applications.
- 7.3 The building proposed for demolition is the West Park Conference Centre, situated at 319 Perth Road. The application site comprises a large, detached building of modern construction. The building, whilst set back and relatively well enclosed with mature trees, has a prominent frontage onto Perth Road due to the rising ground levels to the north and the scale of the building. The conference centre is situated within the West End Suburbs Conservation Area but is not listed.
- 7.4 In the supporting statement, the applicant submits that the existing building does not make any significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and that its demolition would have no significant impact on the local streetscape.
- 7.5 The West End Suburbs Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the conference centre as having a prominent frontage onto Perth Road (appendix F). Whilst it is recognised that a portion of the building is visible from Perth Road, this is minimised due to existing boundary treatments and mature trees which enclose the site to the east, south and west and provide significant screening. Furthermore, the south elevation which fronts Perth Road is not the principal elevation and in terms of siting and appearance does not make a significant contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, which is characterised by large, detached villas on expansive plots which tend to have their principal elevation facing south. As such, due to the level of enclosure of the site and orientation of the building, it is considered that the building holds limited townscape value and does not make a significant contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 7.6 The conference centre is sited within foreground of the category B listed former villa, now West Park Halls. The development of the conference centre building subdivided the historic site of West Park Hall, which is at odds with the prevailing character of the conservation area. The demolition of the West Park Conference Centre would reflect the historic setting of West Park Hall and would have no significant detrimental impact on the character of the local streetscape or wider conservation area. The complete demolition of the existing building and the making good of the site is an acceptable proposal.
- 7.7 As the building does not make a significant positive contribution to the character of the conservation area and is of little townscape value, there is no requirement to consider further justification for its demolition. Notwithstanding, supporting documents have been submitted with the application including a Planning Statement and Structural Survey and Report. The Planning Statement outlines that the redevelopment of the building is unviable due to vacant nature of the building, the existing structural condition of the building, and the cost of repairing it. The structural survey provides an assessment of the current condition of the building, however this is not accompanied by a fee estimate or feasibility assessment and so there is only evidence to consider the current condition of the building and not the potential viability of carrying out the repairs. Based on the structural report, the building is in a deteriorating condition with structural issues to the timber roof structure and exterior brick elevations. Whilst

these elements are not necessarily required to justify the demolition of a building of limited townscape value, they provide further justification for the proposed demolition.

- 7.8 In summary, because the West Park Conference Centre is a modern building sited within the foreground of a listed building, the building does not make a significant positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such, the statutory duty set out in Section 64 of the Act would be satisfied by the approval of this application.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

A – NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 AND DUNDEE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2019

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

Demolition of the Building

- 7.11 **NPF4 Policy 7(f): Historic Assets and Places** - states demolition of buildings in a conservation area which make a positive contribution to its character will only be supported where it has been demonstrated that:

- i reasonable efforts have been made to retain, repair and reuse the building;
- ii the building is of little townscape value;
- iii the structural condition of the building prevents its retention at a reasonable cost; or
- iv the form or location of the building makes its reuse extremely difficult.

- 7.12 **LDP Policy 50: Demolition of Listed Buildings and Buildings in Conservation Areas:** states applications for the demolition of a listed building or an unlisted building that is worthy of retention in a conservation area must be fully supported by reports on the condition and marketing history of the building along with a feasibility study which explores the viability of retaining the building in active use. Where the demolition of a building is acceptable, applications must be supported by acceptable proposals for the redevelopment or treatment of the cleared site.

- 7.13 As discussed above the West Park Conference Centre is a modern building which makes a limited contribution to townscape value and does not enhance the character or appearance of the West End Suburbs Conservation Area. As set out above under NPF4 Policy 7(f) and LDP Policy 50, there is not a requirement to provide further justification for its removal in the case that the building is not worthy of retention or, that does not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Nonetheless, the submission includes a planning statement and structural report which further justify its demolition.

- 7.14 With regards to NPF4 Policy 7(f):

- i no evidence has been provided to demonstrate this criterion;
- ii as discussed above in paragraphs 7.5-7.8 the building is of modern construction and is sited within the foreground of the listed building. Due to the position and orientation of the building, the principal elevation does not front a road, and the site is well enclosed

with mature landscaping and high stone boundary walls. As such the building is not considered to be of significant townscape value;

- iii the applicant has provided a Structural Report which demonstrates the extent of works required to resolve the structural defects and return the building to use as a conference centre. Because a feasibility assessment has not been provided this criterion has not been fully demonstrated. However, it is recognised that the building has not been in use since 2020 and due to the extent of the structural defects, cannot be safely used in its current condition. Furthermore, the Planning Statement submits that there is not sufficient demand for the use of the building as a conference centre and as such works to the building to make it safe would be unviable; and
- iv the submitted Planning Statement outlines that because the building was purpose built as a conference centre and auditorium, the floor plan and design of the building means that it does not lend itself to adaptation to alternative uses

7.15 In summary, because the building does not make a significant positive contribution to the West End Suburbs Conservation Area, NPF4 Policy 7(f) is satisfied. In addition, whilst demonstration of the above criteria (i-iv) is not a requirement of policy 7(f), the building does not make a significant positive contribution to the Conservation Area, as discussed above additional justification has been provided for the demolition particularly with regard to criteria (ii) and (iv) of Policy 7(f).

7.16 With regard to LDP Policy 50 a comprehensive Structural Survey has been submitted for review. However, the marketing history of the building and a supporting feasibility assessment have not been provided. Given the application is for the demolition of an unlisted building that does not make a significant positive contribution to the West End Suburbs Conservation Area, no further information is required to justify the demolition, and the requirements of Policy 50 have been satisfied.

7.17 It has been established above that the building does not make a significant positive contribution to the West End Suburbs Conservation Area and is of limited townscape value. The information submitted sufficiently justifies the complete demolition of the conference centre. Overall, the complete demolition of the building and making good of the site would maintain the historic character of the local streetscape and West End Suburbs Conservation Area.

7.18 **The proposal meets criteria ii and iv of Policy 7f of NPF4 and meets the requirements of Policy 50 of the adopted LDP.**

Redevelopment of the Site

7.19 **NPF4 Policy 7g):** states where demolition within a conservation area is to be followed by redevelopment, consent to demolish will only be supported when an acceptable design, layout and materials are being used for the replacement development.

7.20 **LDP Policy 50:** states that where the demolition of a building is acceptable, applications must be supported by acceptable proposals for the redevelopment or treatment of the cleared site.

7.21 The applicant has stated that there are no proposals to redevelop the site. The supporting Planning Statement outlines that a suitable treatment will be made to ensure the cleared site is left safe and secure post-demolition works. A condition is recommended to obtain this information prior to works beginning on site.

- 7.22 NPF4 Policy 9d): Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings, states that Development proposals for the reuse of existing buildings will be supported, taking into account their suitability for conversion to other uses. Given the need to conserve embodied energy, demolition will be regarded as the least preferred option.
- 7.23 While it is accepted that the demolition of a building is the least preferred option, the subject building was purpose built as a conference centre and the resulting design of the building and floorplan is constrained and does not lend itself to alternative uses. Furthermore, as discussed above, the ongoing use of the building as a conference centre is not viable given the extent of the structural repairs and limited demand for the current space. Therefore, in this instance the proposed demolition is acceptable in compliance with NPF4 Policy 9d.
- 7.24 The proposed demolition of the West Park Conference Centre at 319 Perth Road meets the requirements of the Development Plan.

B – NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 7.25 Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (2019) should be taken into account when determining applications for development which may affect the historic environment. The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland sets out principles and policies for the recognition, care and sustainable management of the historic environment. It seeks to influence decision making that will be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to deal with wide-ranging and ongoing changes to society and the environment, and to achieve the best possible outcome for the historic environment, maximising its benefits.
- 7.26 For the reasons set out in the assessment above, the proposed works would comply with national planning guidance concerned with the historic environment.

B – REPRESENTATIONS

- 7.27 One objection has been received raising the following valid material grounds:
- the conference centre is one of Dundee's most significant buildings of the late 20th Century, and it should not be demolished without every effort made to restore it.
 - the application fails to comply with criteria set out in Historic Environment Scotland guidance to justify its demolition;
 - no evidence of previously marketing the building or assessment of costs of repairs; and
 - the submitted structural report was not compiled by a conservation accredited engineer.
- 7.28 The grounds of objection are considered and assessed as follows:
- 7.29 **Objection** - the conference centre is one of Dundee's most significant buildings of the late 20th Century, and it should not be demolished without every effort made to restore it.
- 7.30 **Response** - the building is not listed or recognised as a key unlisted building within the West End Suburbs Conservation Area Appraisal. It is a modern building representative of its time and purpose. The siting and orientation of the building alongside existing boundary screening means that this building does not make a significant contribution to the streetscape. This is discussed further in paragraph 7.6 - 7.7 above.
- 7.31 **Objection** - the application fails to comply with criteria set out in Historic Environment Scotland guidance to justify its demolition.

- 7.32 **Response** - guidance from HES states that in deciding whether conservation area consent should be granted, planning authorities should take into account the importance of the building to the character or appearance of any part of the conservation area, and of proposals for the future of the cleared site. If the building is of any value, either in itself or as part of a group, a positive attempt should always be made by the planning authority to achieve its retention, restoration and sympathetic conversion to some other compatible use before proposals to demolish are seriously investigated. As the building does not make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, there is no requirement to provide further justification for its demolition. Additionally, HES has no objection to the demolition of the building.
- 7.33 **Objection** - no evidence of previously marketing the building or assessment of costs of repairs.
- 7.34 **Response** - this is considered in the assessment section above (paragraphs 7.12 -7.15).
- 7.35 An objection was also raised regarding the submitted Structural Report not being compiled by a conservation accredited engineer. This is not a material planning consideration as it is not a statutory requirement, and the Structural Report provides a comprehensive overview of the condition of the building.
- 7.36 The issues raised in the representation have been considered and addressed in the report and the grounds raised are not of sufficient weight to justify refusal of planning permission.
- 7.37 **It is concluded that there are no material considerations of sufficient weight in this case to justify refusal of conservation area consent.**

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The application for the complete demolition of the West Park Conference Centre at 319 Perth Road satisfies the duty imposed under Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and is in accordance with the Development Plan. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight that would justify refusal of conservation area consent. Therefore, it is recommended that conservation area consent be granted subject to conditions.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is recommended that conservation area consent be GRANTED subject to the following condition(s):
- 1 **Condition** – no demolition works shall commence until full details for the restoration of the site after the demolition has taken place have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the planning authority.

Reason – to ensure the site is left in a suitable condition and to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and adjacent listed buildings.