THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL	Agenda Item	4.2
CAITHNESS SUTHERLAND AND EASTER ROSS PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 13 DECEMEBER 2011	Report No	PLC/059/11

11/02499/FUL & 11/02511/LBC : Highland Council Highland Council Offices, Market Place, Wick

Report by Area Planning Manager

SUMMARY

Description : Redevelopment of existing Council office buildings to High Street/Market Place to rationalise Council offices in one location. Existing Stafford Place building to be repaired and refurbished. Other attached buildings to be demolished and replaced with new building.

Recommendation - GRANT

Ward: 03 - WICK

Development category : Local

Pre-determination hearing : No Hearing required

Reason referred to Committee : Council development.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 Planning permission and Listed Building Consent are sought for the redevelopment of the Council offices based at Market Place/High Street Wick. The site is located in the centre of Wick, comprised of a complex of three buildings; Market Place building, Stafford Place building and extensions to the rear. The proposal is to demolish the "L-shaped" Market Place buildings, the later extensions and redevelop the site by means of the construction of new buildings on the site of those demolished. The Stafford Place building is a category C(S) Listed Building and redevelopment and reuse of this building is part of the overall proposal.
- 1.2 The proposed works have been subject to extensive consultations. The proposal was presented to the Councils major planning application service; there have been further on site meetings with representatives of the planning service, Conservation Officer and Historic Scotland. A public consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken prior to the submission of the applications.

- 1.3 The site is served by existing foul and surface water mains drainage systems. The site has a number of pedestrian access points onto Market Place and the High Street. The rear of the site is a Council car park that is accessed from the public road at Victoria Place.
- 1.4 The applications are accompanied by a number of supplementary reports detailing specific aspects of the proposal. These reports are a Conservation Statement; a Report of the Public Consultation; a Design Brief; Flood Risk Assessment; Proposed Implementation Plan; a Demolition Statement; a detailed Site Inspection Report; Specification detailing internal works referenced to plans; Structural Survey undertaken in 1996 and a recent Structural Condition Report; SuDs report; Design and Access Statement; Sustainability Statement; Travel Plan Report; detailed Window and Door Survey report; Demolition Strategy and an Ecological report.
- 1.5 No variations have been submitted.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The Council Offices form the frontage to the west side of Market Square and the adjoining section of the High Street. The North elevation adjacent to High Street is curved in profile to follow the line of the Street, this curved building is known as the Stafford Place building. Stafford Place is bow fronted, constructed of Caithness sandstone (mid grey), with honey buff dressed sandstone detailing. The roof is hipped duo pitches that end in monopitched gables. The other buildings on site are a lime harl finish that has been painted. There is a mix of roofing materials either of slate or tile. The Stafford Place building dates from the 1820s and is category C(S) Listed, the other buildings are later constructed buildings that replaced those that historically occupied their sites, the extensions are 1950s additions. By virtue of the fact the buildings are interconnected and physically attached to Stafford Place they are all Listed.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 NONE

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised :

10/02511/LBC: Listed Building Consent

10/02499/FUL: Neighbour Notification

Representation deadline : 4/8/11

Timeous representations : 1

Late representations : 0

- 4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:
 - Requiring the reuse of the existing Market Place street name sign on the new building
 - Gaelic sign to be below or above the reuse existing sign

4.3 All letters of representation can be viewed online <u>www.highland.gov.uk</u>, at the Area Planning Office and for Councillors, will be available for inspection immediately prior to the Committee Meeting.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 **Conservation Officer** : no objection and supports the proposals
- 5.2 Area Roads and Community Works Manager: No objections and endorses the principles of the Green Travel Plan which underpins the approach undertaken. Highlights concerns however that the proposal whilst meeting a number of corporate objectives will through the loss of 36 car parking spaces and office rationalisation result in increased demands within Wick town centre. This reduction in parking will lead to displaced parking which may impact on consumer and retail parking which may discourage visitors and shoppers from the town centre.
- 5.3 **Historic Scotland**: Welcome the retention of Stafford Place building and the retention of important historical features of the building, in the building and the cellular plan form reinstated. The replacement buildings will not have a significant impact on the setting of Stafford Place. It should be noted that Historic Scotland will be the determining authority for the demolition and listed building alterations.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

6.1 Highland Structure Plan 2001

G2	Design for Sustainability
G6	Conservation and promotion of the Highland Heritage
BC5	Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas
S1	Services and Facilities

6.2 Caithness Local Plan

3 Redevelopment of Market Place buildings

7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan

29 Sustainable Design

30 Design Quality and Place-Making

58 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage

7.2 **Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance** Designing for Sustainability in the Highlands

7.3 Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy; Scottish Historic Environment Policy

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

- 8.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.2 This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

8.3 **Development Plan Policy Assessment**

The Caithness Local Plan promotes a healthy and vibrant town centre and aims to strengthen the Wick's role as a sub-regional shopping and business centre.

Policy 3 in the Wick chapter of the Local Plan highlights the opportunity to redevelop the site of the Highland Council offices at Market Place. It is acknowledged that it is a high profile site and a key part of the landscape and any development must be in keeping with the scale and massing of surrounding buildings, some of which are listed. The Local plan states that the Council will expect a high quality development which needs to take account of:

- A mix of uses
- 3 storey building
- Natural stone/slate finishes
- Maintenance of the existing street pattern
- The riverside prospect
- Parking to the rear.

In regards to the policies of the Local Plan and the stated aspirations for the development of the site the proposal accords with the policies. The proposal represents the regeneration of a prominent site in the town centre.

In terms of an assessment of the proposals against the Structure Plan polices the proposed development of the new offices meets the design for sustainability criteria of G2. The Design Brief and the Design and Access Statement both make clear reference to the sustainability aspects of the new building when compared to the existing buildings. The ethos of sustainability has been a key in the proposed new build elements. The redevelopment of the buildings is based on the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREAM) rationale assessment. The development is to achieve a BREEAM "Excellent" energy rating. These new buildings are designed fit for purpose with the goals of delivery of efficient and effective service delivery following a rationalisation of office accommodation in Wick.

The proposal adheres to the policies of the Structure Plan in place to safeguard the historic and cultural heritage. The application has been supported by various reports attesting to the structural condition of the present buildings on Market Place and the recent extensions and the fact they are beyond economic repair. The

Conservation Statement and demolition statement make it clear that the buildings on market place and the extensions to the rear are of little architectural or historic merit and make little, if any, contribution to the townscape.

8.4 Material Considerations

Demolition: the scheme proposes the partial demolition of a listed building; the Scottish Historic Environment Policy provides detailed policy on the demolition of listed buildings including a number of criteria which applicants and their proposals should address. Primarily the policy focuses on four "tests" for demolition;

- a. the building is not of special interest Highland Council has employed Andrew Wright as an independent consultant to assess the building in it's entirety and define those elements and characteristics which positively contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the building. The section proposed for demolition is a later addition to the main building and is therefore considered to be less historically significant in listed building terms than the earlier built form which fronts the main High Street. The later addition proposed for demolition is physically attached to the main building but is a 1950s addition which is significantly different in architectural style. As such it is agreed that this building is not of the same architectural and historic merit as the earlier 1820 main listed building known as Stafford Place.
- b. The building is incapable of repair there are a number of structural reports which suggest that the section of building proposed for demolition is in need of some repair, however it is not considered that the building is demonstrated to be beyond repair.
- c. The demolition of the building is essential to delivering significant benefits to economic growth or the wider community Highland Council have embarked on a major scheme of re-development to improve office accommodation and service delivery to the local community of Wick and the wider community in Caithness. Keeping services centrally based in the town and leading the way for development is a key driver for the regions economy. Therefore it is agreed and supported that the proposal is aimed at achieving significant benefit for the wider community and encouraging and supporting economic growth for both Wick and Caithness.
- d. The repair of the building is not economically viable and that it has been marketed at a price reflecting its location and condition to potential restoring purchasers for a reasonable period Highland Council have made attempts to market the Stafford Place buildings and have extensive structural reports over several years suggesting that major investment is required due to the buildings condition. Given the current local and global economy and Wick's location it is considered acceptable that a financially viable solution for retention of the 1950s section of the building would be unlikely in the foreseeable future.

It is only necessary for the proposed demolition of a listed building to meet one of the tests set down in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy. However in the current applications Highland Council demonstrate that all four tests have been met in part in relation to the proposed partial demolition with tests a, c & d being entirely satisfied.

Design: The site is in an elevated position and to the rear will look over the river and the Lower Pulteneytown Conservation Area. Therefore the proposal has the potential to impact on both the river frontage and the Conservation area beyond. The site is prominent in the townscape visitors who may approach from the south and east. This is of particular significance in relation to approach from the harbour which can attract visitors and has in recent years been upgraded with new pontoons etc to encourage greater use. Equally there has been substantial investment of public funds into the improvement and regeneration of the These key factors of the townscape are both relevant conservation area. considerations for this development proposal. The design of the new buildings for Market Place and High Street are also an important consideration. This section of the site is prominent in the pedestrian area of the High Street and the design proposed sits comfortably in this location and respects the form, proportions and height of the existing buildings. The proposal makes a positive contribution to the sense of place in the town centre. The design is modern and contemporary but there is a pattern and grain it to the proposal that respects the surrounding area. The restored and refurbished Stafford Place building will be enhanced by the proposed design of the new build elements. Stafford Place will also benefit aesthetically by the proposed repairs to the external fabric that are to be undertaken using suitable materials and techniques. Many of these repairs will undue past repairs that have been unsympathetically executed.

Internal alterations to listed building – the scheme proposes major interventions for the earlier sections of the listed building. The plans have been prepared and developed following a long and detailed pre application process in which comments from both the Highland Council Historic Environment Team and Historic Scotland have informed the scheme proposal. The initial scheme was led by the conservation statement prepared by Andrew Wright, this document identifies those elements of the listed building which are judged to be of historical and architectural merit. The design proposed has been prepared to retain and protect the elements identified.

The scheme submitted represents a reduced level of intervention than that initially proposed and retains more of the historic fabric and detail of the listed building. It is accepted that the level of intervention proposed is necessary to create internal accommodation which meets the needs of the client user in the 21st century. In turn it also accepted that this level of intervention is required to keep the listed building in viable long term use.

Therefore the level of intervention and alteration to the listed building is considered acceptable subject to conditions in relation to materials and detailing.

The Conservation Statement and the proposed works maintain as much of the existing fabric and associated finishes. The works proposed are the minimum intervention to secure the Stafford Place building for modern office that is accessible and efficient. The major structural works are confined to the basement and ground floor and are therefore in line with good practice as they are in the areas where previous interventions have been undertaken.

Townscape – the proposal includes various new extensions to the listed building. At present there are currently some significantly poor quality rear extensions which are not only have a detrimental impact on the main listed building but also make a less than desirable contribution to the wider townscape of the area. This is more significant given the location as the rear of the building is clearly viewed across the river from the Lower Pulteney Town Conservation Area. As such the principle of removal of these elements and their replacement with a more appropriately designed building is welcomed and supported. It is considered that the proposed scheme of redevelopment to the rear will improve the setting of the listed building, improve the overall quality of the townscape and achieve some significant improvement in sustainability terms.

The new development to the Market Square replaces the current 1950s section of the listed building. The design approach here has been to create a building which fits into the existing townscape and built form but is entirely new, honest and of its time architecturally. The basic principles adopted in the development of the proposed new building are in line with those set out in national policy and guidance on design. Therefore it is accepted that the proposal has been developed in line with policy and as such the scheme proposed is considered acceptable.

Sustainable Drainage - the flood risk assessment submitted in support of the applications clearly states that the development will not be subject to or cause flooding. The proposal includes details for harvesting water for use in toilets as well as attenuation measures to reduce water discharge rates prior to disposal to mains infrastructure.

Parking & Transport – TEC's whilst recognising the importance of the Green Travel Plan have highlighted concerns regarding the loss of 36 car parking spaces and the increase in the number of staff.

Government policy contained in Designing Streets and demonstrated in the Green Travel Plan advocates the use of alternate transport rather than the continued focus on the private car. The Green Travel Plan places clear emphasis on the need to reduce reliance on the private car. There a number of car parks within Wick town centre which are readily accessible by foot. A car parking survey was undertaken which highlighted that the public car parks are currently operating under capacity therefore they are capable of accommodating the displaced car parking required as a result of this development.

Public transport is available both by bus and rail. It is contended that this public transport provision coupled with showering facilities and cycle rack provision for up to 20 cycles will provide a diverse range of transport opportunities consistent with the Government and Council's corporate objectives.

Given the town centre location of the site this development meets the sustainable criteria set in government and council guidance and policy. The proposal provides clear emphasis on alternate transport modes that the location allows.

The Planning Service acknowledges the concerns highlighted by TEC Services but it is important to recognise the role of the Green Travel Plan and the emphasis this places on a holistic approach to transport. The supporting information namely the Green Travel Plan, car park survey and subsequent office/desk occupancy rates are sufficient information on which to base a qualified approval in this instance. The comments of TEC's as presented are noted and the parking patterns and demands that emerge within Wick town centre following this development may require to be reviewed by the Council and subsequently addressed accordingly.

8.5 **Other Considerations – not material**

The reuse of existing signage- has been raised in the one representation received in respect of the applications. While this issue is not material in the assessment of the application the reuse of the signage could well be incorporated into the finished proposals so a condition will be attached to the consent.

8.6 Matters to be secured by Section 75 Agreement

None

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The provision of new Council offices in Wick serving Caithness has been a long standing priority of the Council. The proposals are a mix of clearing the site, developing new bespoke office accommodation designed to sustainable construction methods and a proposal to reuse the historical building of Stafford Place. The new build element is based on contemporary design that respects the location and its surrounding townscape and built quality of the area. The reuse and refurbishment proposed for Stafford place respects the original form and layout of the original building and retains in situ many of the historically interesting elements as a result of the proposed works.

10. **RECOMMENDATION**

Action required before decision issued y

Notification to Historic Scotland

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Formal notification to Historic Scotland is required as the proposal involves substantial demolition of a listed building. Historic Scotland determines the Listed Building Consent in this instance, on behalf of Ministers, as the buildings are owned by the Council.

Subject to the above, it is recommended planning permission (ref 11/02499/FUL) be **Approved** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby approved shall only be carried out in strict accordance with details of the materials to be used on the external walls and roof of the proposed building(s) which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason : To ensure a satisfactory form of development, which contributes appropriately to its setting

2. The development hereby approved shall only be carried out in strict accordance with a programme of phasing which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason : To ensure that the development of the estate proceeds in an orderly manner.

3. All planting comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and shall be maintained thereafter and replaced as may be necessary for a period of two years from the date of completion of the planting, seeding or turfing.

Reason : to ensure that the proposed landscaping is carried out as approved.

4. Before any works commence a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority indicating proposals for the satisfactory storage of refuse in accordance with BS.5906. The details of refuse disposal shall also include details for the disposal of biomass ash. Such proposals as shall be agreed shall be implemented and thereafter retained.

Reason : to ensure the provision of satisfactory facilities for the storage of refuse and the safe disposal of ash.

5. No demolition or construction activities shall be take on the site before 8am on weekdays and 8 am on Saturdays nor after 6 pm on weekdays and 4 pm on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or bank holidays).

Reason : In order to control the noise emanating from the site

6. The works of demolition hereby permitted shall not be begun until documentary evidence is produced to show that contracts have been entered into by the developer to ensure that building work is commenced within a period of 6 months following commencement of demolition.

Reason : to prevent premature demolition in the interests of the character of the town centre.

7. Within 3 months of the date of this consent details of the signage to be used (its size, materials and means of attachment to the building) on the buildings shall be submitted for the further approval of the Planning authority. The details shall include, where practicable, the reuse of existing street name signage. The development shall be undertaken in strict accord with the approved details.

Reason: to ensure that the signage is appropriate to the building and the area.

8. Notwithstanding the details on the approved plans the flues serving the plant and biomass boilers shall be painted or treated in such a matter to be of a matt appearance. Exact details of the means of treatment shall be submitted for the further approval of the Planning Authority and thereafter the development shall be undertaken in accord with the approved details.

Reason: the presence of exhaust flues that are reflective and visually prominent would detract from the aesthetics and overall design of the proposal.

Please note: Your attention is drawn to the conditions attached to this permission. Any preconditions (those requiring certain works, submissions etc. prior to commencement of development) must be fulfilled prior to work starting on site. Failure to meet these conditions may invalidate your permission or result in formal enforcement action.

INFORMATIVE NOTE REGARDING THE TIME LIMIT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLANNING PERMISSION

In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), the development to which this planning permission relates must commence within THREE YEARS of the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period, then this planning permission shall lapse.

Flood Risk: It is important to note that the granting of listed building consent and planning permission does not imply there is an unconditional absence of flood risk relating to (of emanating from) the application site. As per Scottish Planning Policy 7: Planning & Flooding, planning permission does not remove the liability position of developers or owners in relation to flood risk.

Important Note: Both planning permission and listed building consent are required for these works. You are not authorised to commencement development until you have both consents in place. Furthermore, both consents and their respective conditions must be read, and complied with, in tandem.

Subject to the above, it is recommended the Listed Building consent (ref 11/02511/LBC) be **granted** subject to the following conditions and reasons:

1. The development hereby approved shall only be carried out in strict accordance with details of the materials to be used on the external walls and roof of the proposed buildings which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development, which contributes appropriately to its setting.

2. Notwithstanding the details submitted on the approved plans or contained in the supporting information no works shall take place to the windows in Stafford Place building until detailed plans and specifications (including sections) of the proposed windows have been submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority.

Reason: to protect the special architectural and historic interest, character and detail of the Listed Building.

3. Notwithstanding the details of the approved plans full details of the flues, vents, skylights, alarm boxes, emergency lighting and all other services additions required to be installed in Stafford place shall be submitted for the prior approval of the Planning Authority.

Reason: to protect the special architectural and historic interest, character and detail of the Listed Building.

4. Notwithstanding the details if the approved plans a detailed method statement of how the new build additions shall be physically attached to the listed building shall be submitted for the further approval of the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the detailed methodology shall include no cementious or other non breathable materials.

Reason: to protect the special architectural and historic interest, character and detail of the Listed Building.

5. Repairs to the external fabric of the Stafford place building shall be undertaken in accord with the methodology statement and specifications prepared by the consultants for the Scottish Lime centre and submitted in support of the application.

Reason: to protect the special architectural and historic interest, character and detail of the Listed Building.

6. The outline Demolition Statement, the Specification List (door and window survey) and Demolition Report shall be amalgamated and presented in a format that allows the features to be salvaged, retained or reused to be identified in situ prior to the commencement of development and where they are reused in the development. The identified features presented in this report shall be reused in the development when written approval of the report's contents is received.

Reason: to protect the special architectural and historic interest, character and detail of the Listed Building. No single, comprehensive report details what is to be retained or how it is to be reused in the proposed development.

7. The slate roof shall be laid in traditional diminishing courses, be of natural slate in a colour to match existing slate and shall be 7mm – 9mm thick.

Reason: to protect the special architectural and historic interest, character and detail of the Listed Building.

Please note: Your attention is drawn to the conditions attached to this permission. Any preconditions (those requiring certain works, submissions etc. prior to commencement of development) must be fulfilled prior to work starting on site. Failure to meet these conditions may invalidate your permission or result in formal enforcement action.

Important Note: Both planning permission and listed building consent are required for these works. You are not authorised to commencement development until you have both consents in place. Furthermore, both consents and their respective conditions must be read, and complied with, in tandem.

Signature:	Dafydd Jones
Designation:	Area Planning Manager North
Author:	Victor Hawthorne
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans:	Plan 1 – location plan
	Plan 2 – site plan
	Plan 3 – floor plans
	Plan 4 – elevations
	Plan 5 – sections
	Plan 6 – roof plan

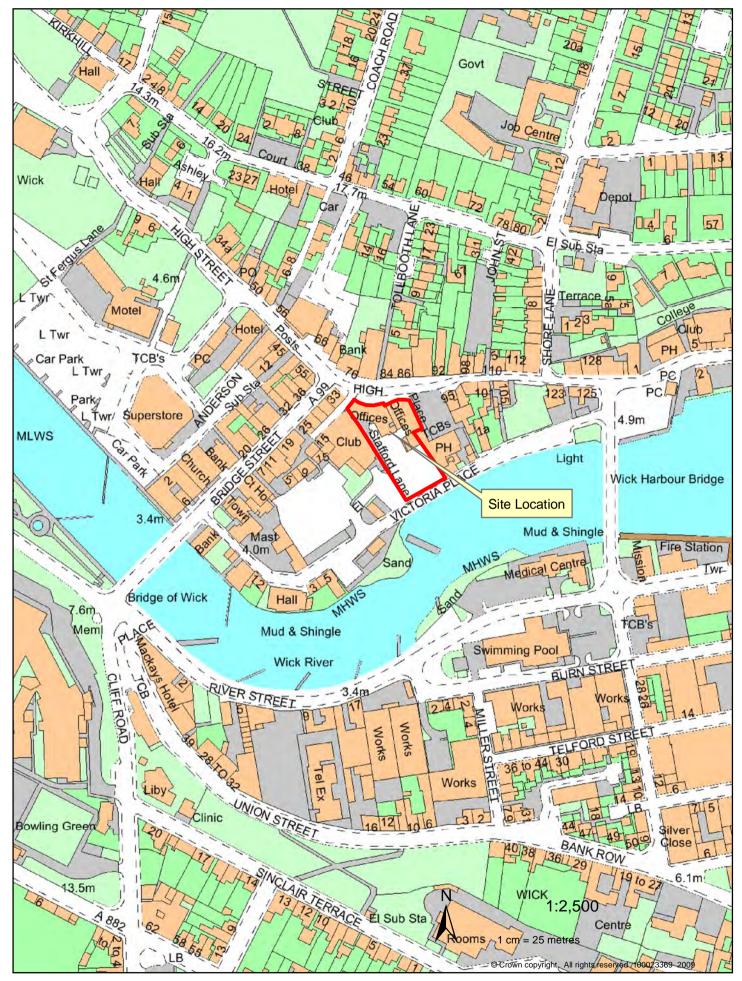
Appendix – Letters of Representation

Name	Address	Date Received	For/Against
L Bush	Animaland, 16 Kennedy Street, Wick.	28/7/11	For



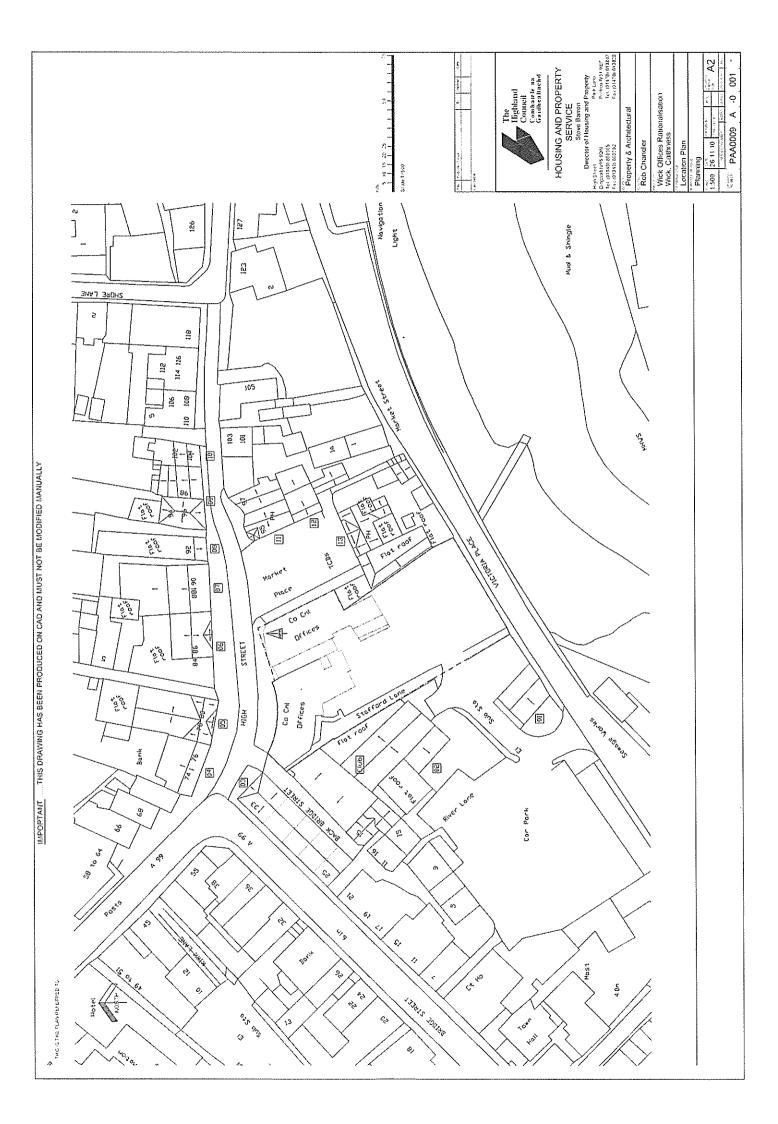
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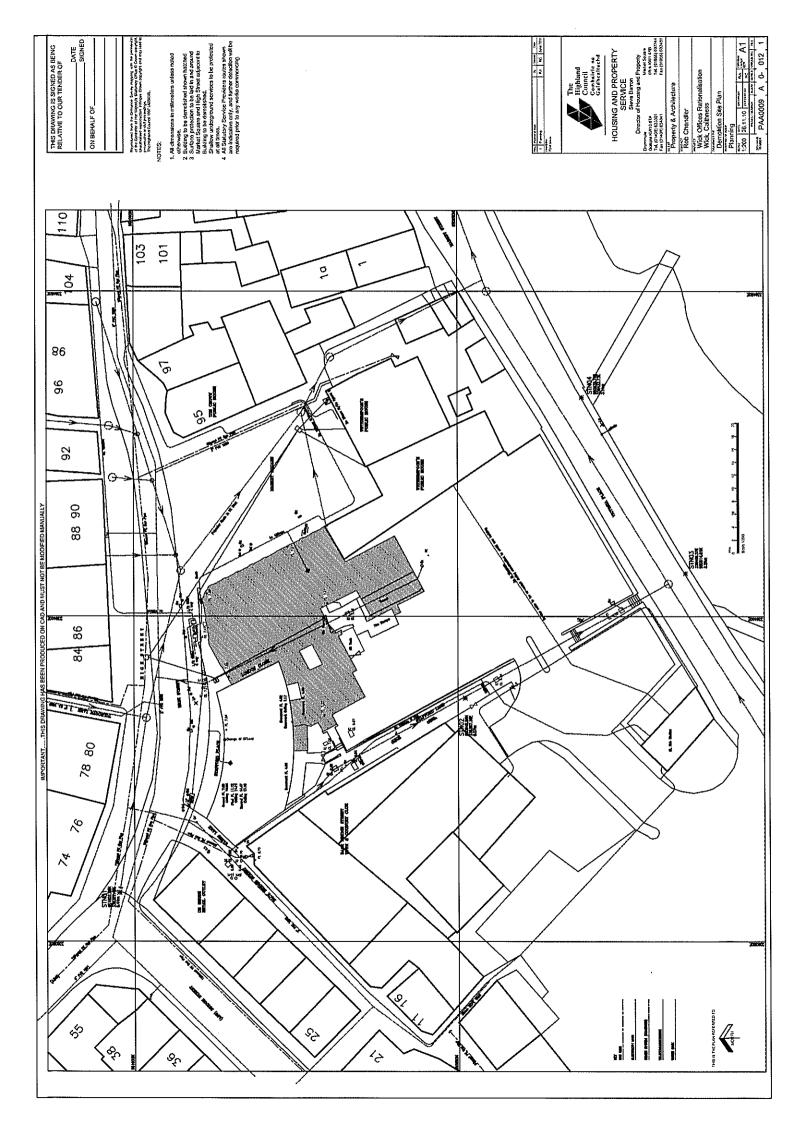
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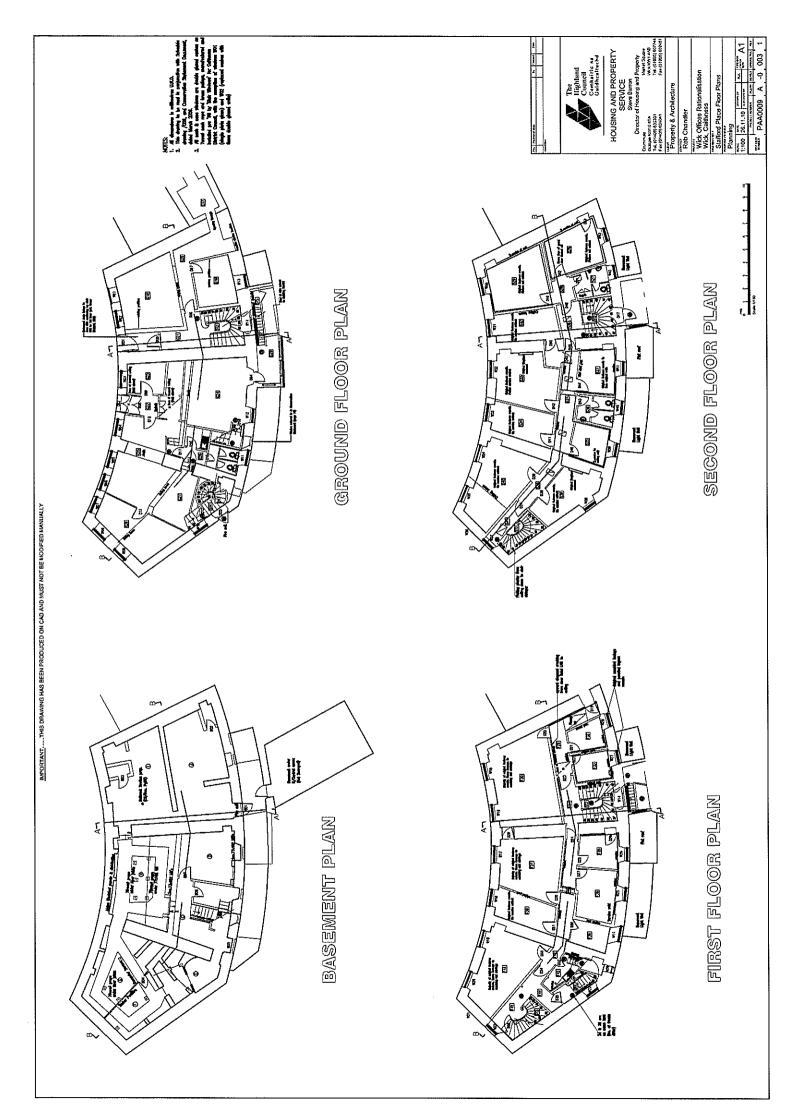


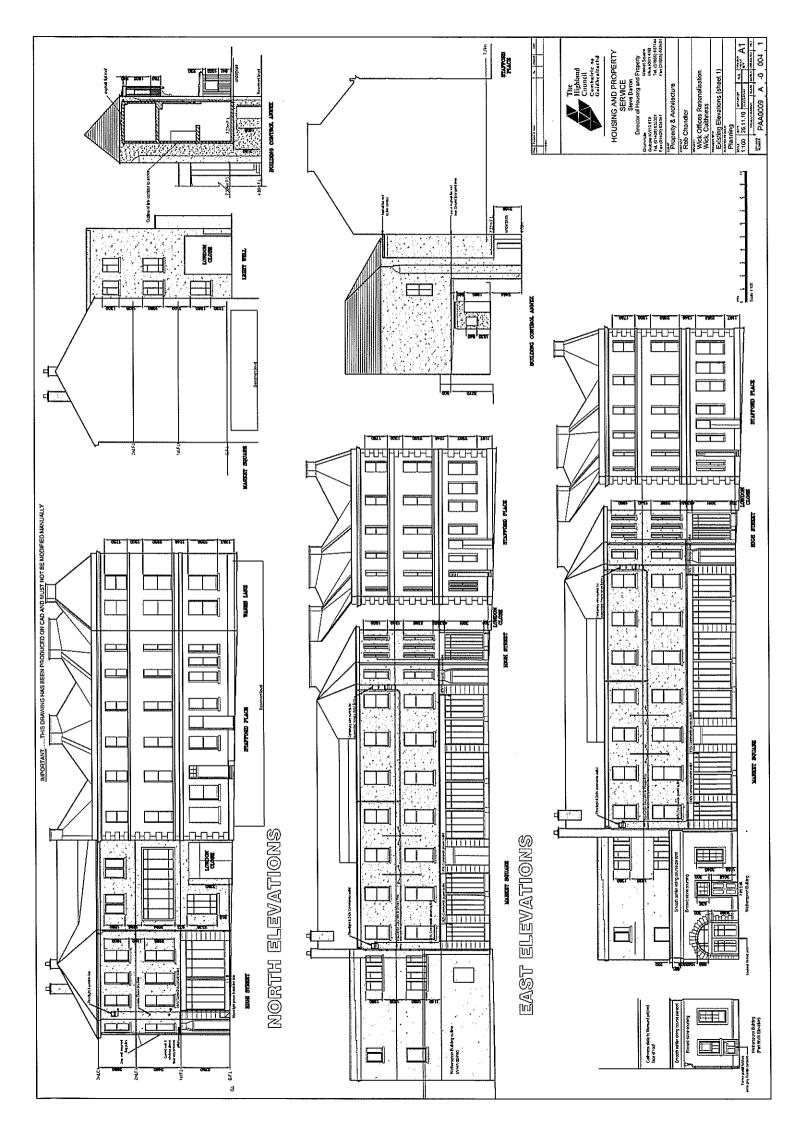
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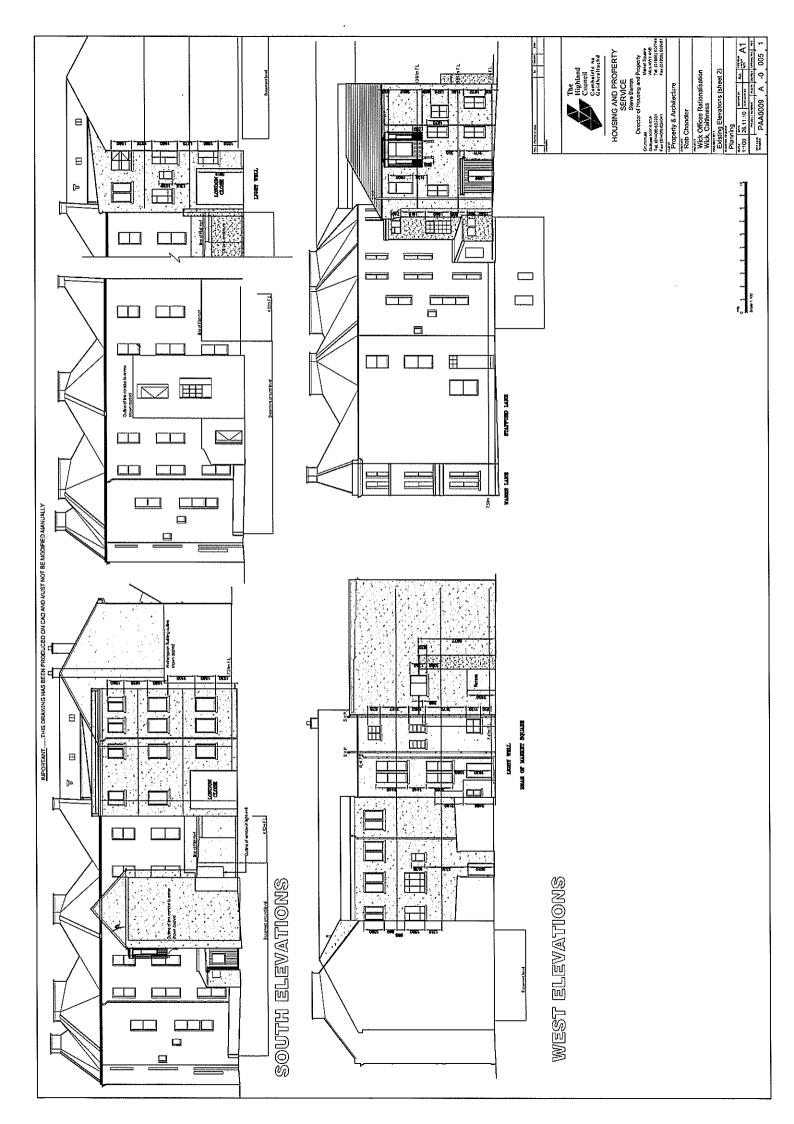
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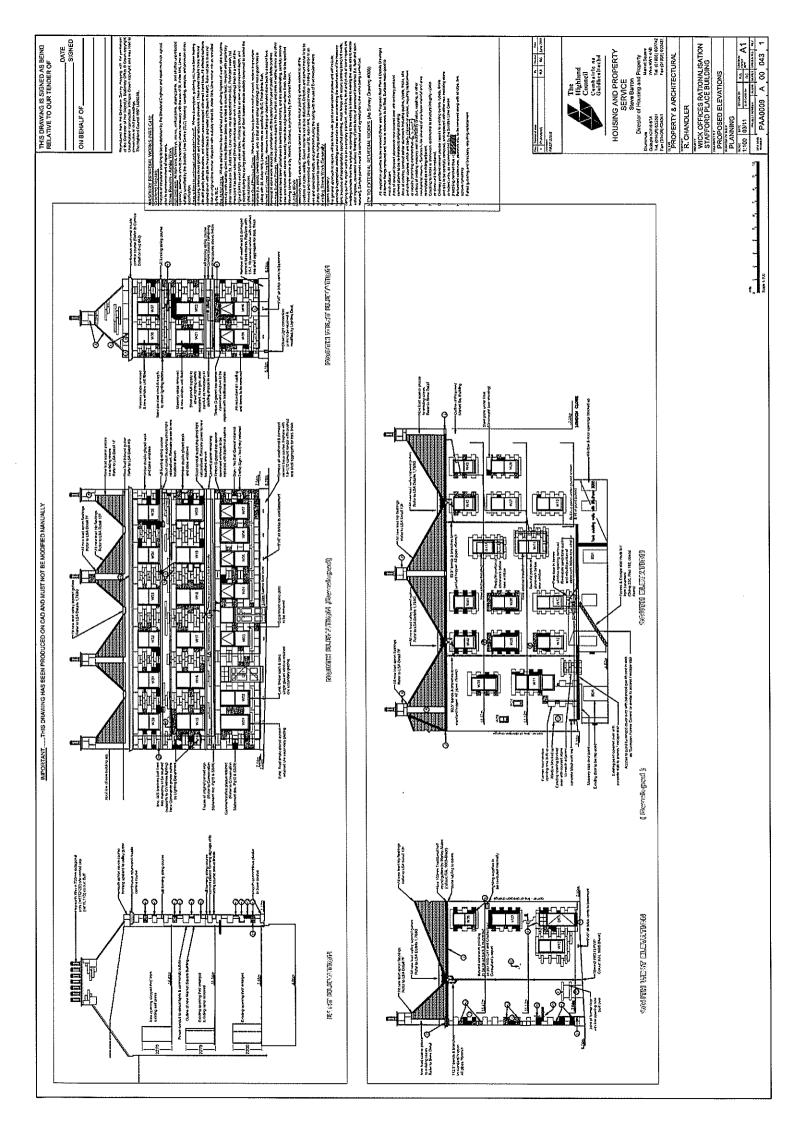


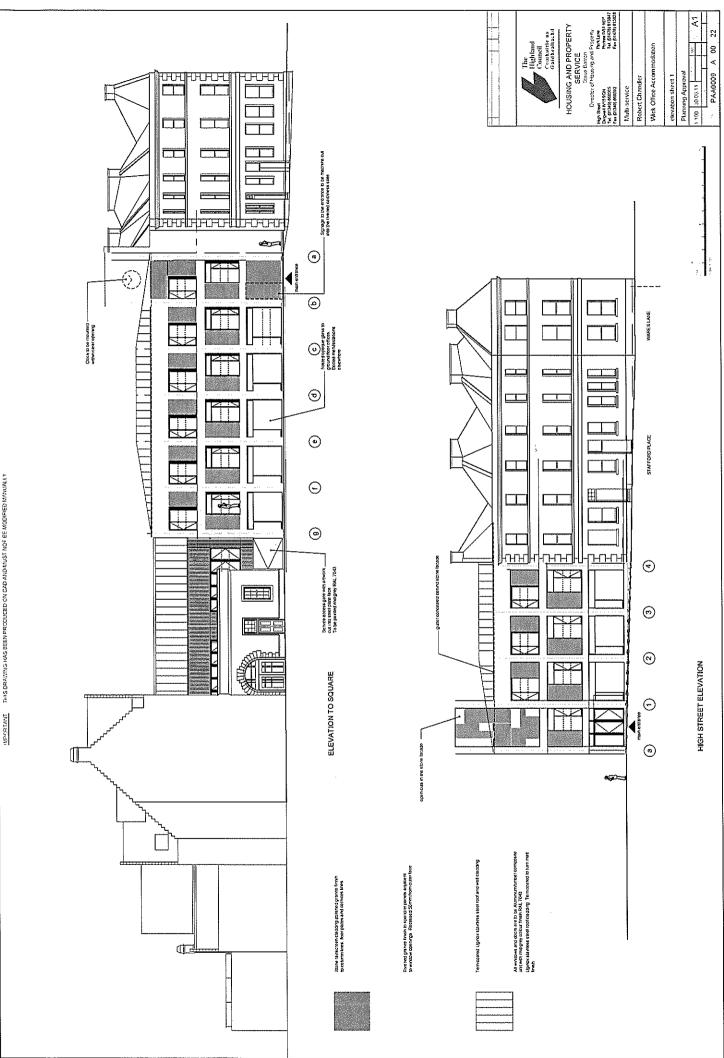












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