

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE  
07 June 2016**

Agenda Item	6.2
Report No	PLN/030/16

**15/02132/LBC and 15/02234/FUL : Young Robertson and Co  
29 Traill Street, Thurso**

**Report by Area Planning Manager North**

**SUMMARY**

**Description:** Lime-mortar pointing of all exterior walls, rear walls new lime-mortar harling also proposed.

**Recommendation : REFUSE**

**Ward:** 02 Thurso

**Development category:** Local Development

**Pre-determination hearing:** n/a

**Reason referred to Committee:** Local member request.

**1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 1.1 The site is a B-listed building (group with No.s 31-35 Traill Street), within Thurso Conservation Area.
- 1.2 There was no pre-app consultation.
- 1.3 There are no impacts on access, amenity or infrastructure.
- 1.4 A Supporting Statement was submitted with the application.
- 1.5 **Variations:** A Conservation Statement was submitted following concerns over the proposed harling of the rear elevation.

**2. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 No.s 25/27/29 Traill Street are one of a pair of group-listed buildings (B), also incorporating Nos 31/33/35; the pair are central to the urban block which is bounded by Sir John's Square to the SW and Cowie Lane to the NE. The buildings to either side are also listed, Nos 19/21/23(C) and No 37 (Cs). The site is also fully within the Thurso Conservation Area.

The building-group is later 19th century, 2-storey and attic, symmetrical 16-bay terrace of shops at ground floor and dwellings above. Ashlar frontage with polished ashlar dressings, 12 (modern) shop windows and 4 entrances. To the rear the elevation is dominated by the two projecting stair-towers/extensions which are visible as prominent elements on the rear of the wider group, particularly from Sir John's Square. The rear elevation of the listed pair is coursed Caithness stone with flush mortar pointing, as are the rears of all buildings within the urban block; there are areas of cement pointing which is spread to the extent of slaister pointing.

### **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 01/00192/FULCA and 01/00193/LBCCA were consented on 18.10.2001 for the internal alterations to office area, installation of new shop front, and re-build rear extension.
- 3.2 02/00046/ADVCA and 02/00118/LBCCA were consented for the erection of fascia sign on 05.09.2002 and 04.06.2002 respectively.

### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- 4.1 Advertised : Listed Building Consent advert, expiry of consultation period 10.07.2015.  
Representation deadline : Neighbour consultation deadline 05.07.2015.  
Timeous representations : 0  
Late representations : 0
- 4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:  
▪ n/a

### **5. CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 **Historic Environment Scotland** : no objection/comments.  
Note that Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has a national remit for the Historic Environment, and as such does not provide detailed comments on every application. A decision not to provide detailed comments or not to object should not be taken as support for the proposals by HES, and HES advise the application should be assessed by the Council against local and national policy and guidance on the Historic Environment.

### **6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

#### **6.1 Highland-Wide Local Development Plan 2012**

- |    |                                 |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 28 | Sustainable Design              |
| 29 | Design Quality and Place-making |
| 34 | Settlement Development Areas    |

- 6.2 **Caithness Local Plan 2002 (as continued in force):** No site-specific policies
- 6.3 **Caithness and Sutherland Proposed Local Plan 2015 (CaSPlan):** No site-specific policies

## 7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 7.1 Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance

Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)

Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)

Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)

### 7.2 Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (The Scottish Government, June 2014)

National Planning Framework 3 (The Scottish Government, June 2014)

Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Historic Scotland, December 2011)

### 7.3 Other

Historic (Environment) Scotland: Managing Change in the Historic Environment: External Walls (October 2010).

## 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. 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.

- 8.2 Sections 14 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that, "In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the planning authority.....shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".

### 8.3 Development Plan Policy Assessment

Policy 28 requires that proposed development demonstrates sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with local character and the historic environment, and in making use of appropriate materials. The proposal has failed to adequately consider its context and will appear out-of-character to the surrounding historic environment.

Policy 29 requires that new development makes a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of a place, with sensitivity and respect towards local distinctiveness of the architecture and historic patterns of development. The

proposed harling will disrupt the consistency which is currently achieved by this wider terrace of listed buildings, creating an insensitive juxtaposition which will be clearly visible within the conservation area townscape.

Policy 57 requires that developments do not have an unacceptable impact on the heritage resource, and that they are of a design and quality to enhance the historic environment. Development should set a pro-active, consistent approach to the protection of the historic environment. The proposal has failed to consider the impact it will have on the historic environment, both the attached building with which it is group-listed as well as the other listed buildings adjacent to either side. The resultant development would appear as discordant within the heritage townscape.

#### **8.4 Material Considerations**

The proposed works to repoint the ashlar masonry on the front elevation are fully acceptable, subject to confirmation of the lime-mortar mix and method of application. The proposed works to apply a full harling to the rear elevation, which is currently flush-pointed, however raise significant heritage issues. The rear of the listed group (No.s 25-35 odds) is currently flush-pointed, as are the listed buildings to either side; this gives a consistency of material/aesthetic finish and character over the wider listed group. To apply harling to one of the central buildings in this group will be visually discordant and disruptive to the wider character of the whole.

The Historic (Environment) Scotland guidance 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment, External Walls, October 2010', notes in section 4.4: Alterations, that all alteration proposals should take into account the design and material characteristics of the historic wall. Section 4.8 Harling, notes that new lime or clay harl, render or lime-wash should be based on evidence of previous use of the material on the building.

A significant problem with both the elevations of this building are the long-term neglect and lack of essential maintenance which have caused mortar pointing to be lost and masonry joints to be left open for water penetration. Areas have also had cement mortar applied, which exacerbates problems by retaining moisture and causing stone to decay.

The Applicant's heritage consultant has submitted a brief report which addresses the general issue of Caithness stone's long-term decay and supports a full-scale harling of the rear elevation. However, this report fails to recognise or address the fact that this building is one of a group-listed pair, and that they are flanked by further listed buildings to either side; the impact of the proposal has therefore not been considered relative to its contextual heritage impacts, but solely addressed its own condition. This is considered to be a major failing in the submitted supporting information.

On assessing the proposal initially, the Planning Service made the suggestion that a 'slaister-harl/pointing' would be an acceptable compromise which would help to protect the stonework while also retaining the character of the group-listed buildings and the setting of the adjacent heritage assets. This suggestion was discounted by the Applicant who considered from the start of this application that a

full harling was the only acceptable conservation option, to weatherproof the rear elevation; this opinion was emphasised at a site meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016 which was also attended by the applicant's Conservation Consultant.

A slaister-harl/pointing completely fills the gap between stones and spreads over their surface, leaving the central portion of the stone face exposed and visible. A current example of this being applied (at the time of this application) is on the Castle of Mey, to the east of Thurso. Here slaister-pointing is being applied onto Caithness stone walling with the approval of Historic Environment Scotland, who are also part-funding the works. Historic Environment Scotland have therefore considered this procedure to be an appropriate conservation solution to Caithness stone which is on an older and more exposed building than this application site. Historic Environment Scotland would be involved in any subsequent appeal on this decision.

**8.5 Other Considerations – not material**

None.

**8.6 Matters to be secured by Section 75 Agreement**

Not applicable.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of applicable material considerations.

It is regrettable that a compromise solution for the rear-elevation has not been agreed. The alternative solution put forward by the Planning Service has been discounted by the Applicant.

It is recommended that planning permission and listed building consent be refused.

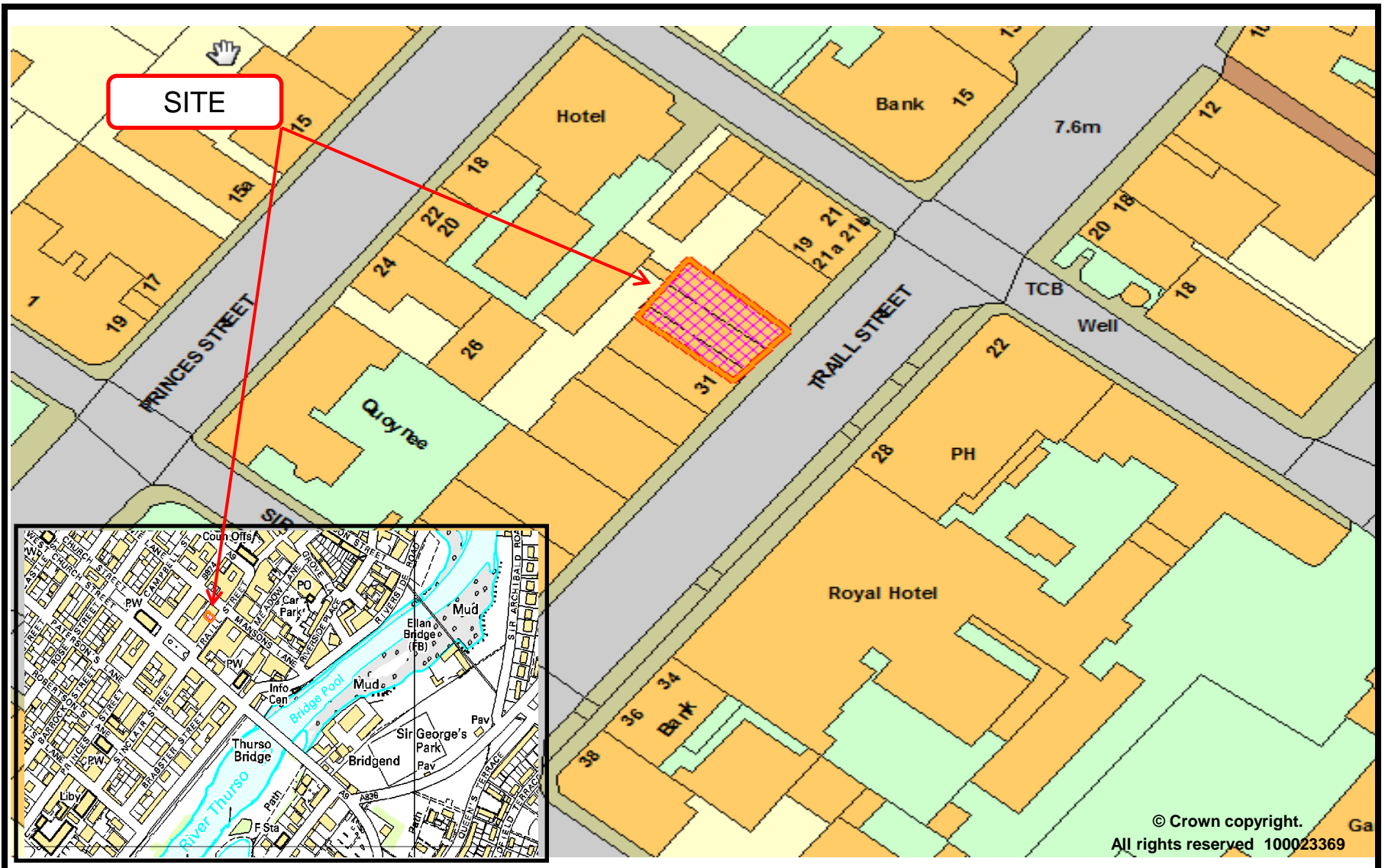
**10. RECOMMENDATION**

**Subject to the above**, it is recommended the application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. 15/02132/LBC: The proposed complete lime-harling to the rear elevation has failed to consider its negative impact on the character of the attached group-listed building, as well as the adjacent listed buildings to either side. The proposed harling will appear both discordant and incongruous on the rear of a listed terrace which is pointed masonry, and is contrary to Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage of the Highland-Wide Local Development Plan 2012 and the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Historic Scotland, December 2011).

2. 15/02234/FUL: The proposed harling to the rear elevation of No.s 25-29 Traill Street will be visually disruptive to the group of listed buildings and will fail to preserve or enhance the character/appearance of the Thurso Conservation Area, particularly on views from Sir John's Square. This is contrary to Policies: 28 Sustainable Design; 29 Design Quality and Place-making; 34 Settlement Development Areas and; 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage of the Highland-Wide Local Development Plan 2012.

Signature: Dafydd Jones  
Designation: Area Planning Manager North  
Author: Norman Brockie  
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.  
Relevant Plans: Plan 1 – Location Plan



**The Highland Council**  
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Planning and  
Development Service

15/02132/LBC & 15/02234/FUL

**Lime mortar pointing of all exterior walls, rear walls lime mortar harling  
also proposed.**

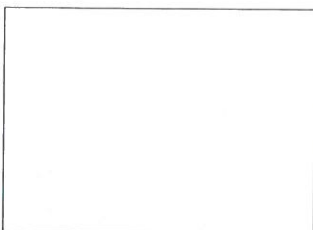


Scale:

# 29 Traill Street, Thurso



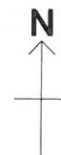
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