

PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT



ITEM: 08

Application Number: 12/00099/LBC

Applicant: Rotolock (Holdings) Ltd

Description of Application: Refurbishment and extensions to existing redundant buildings to form hotel development to include refurbishment of jetty, refurbishment, part demolition and extensions to Grade II listed Barrack Block, Island House, and Ablutions Block. Refurbishment and part demolition to scheduled Ancient Monument Casemated Battery and general landscaping and infrastructure works

Type of Application: Listed Building

Site Address: DRAKE'S ISLAND PLYMOUTH

Ward: St Peter & The Waterfront

Valid Date of Application: 24/01/2012

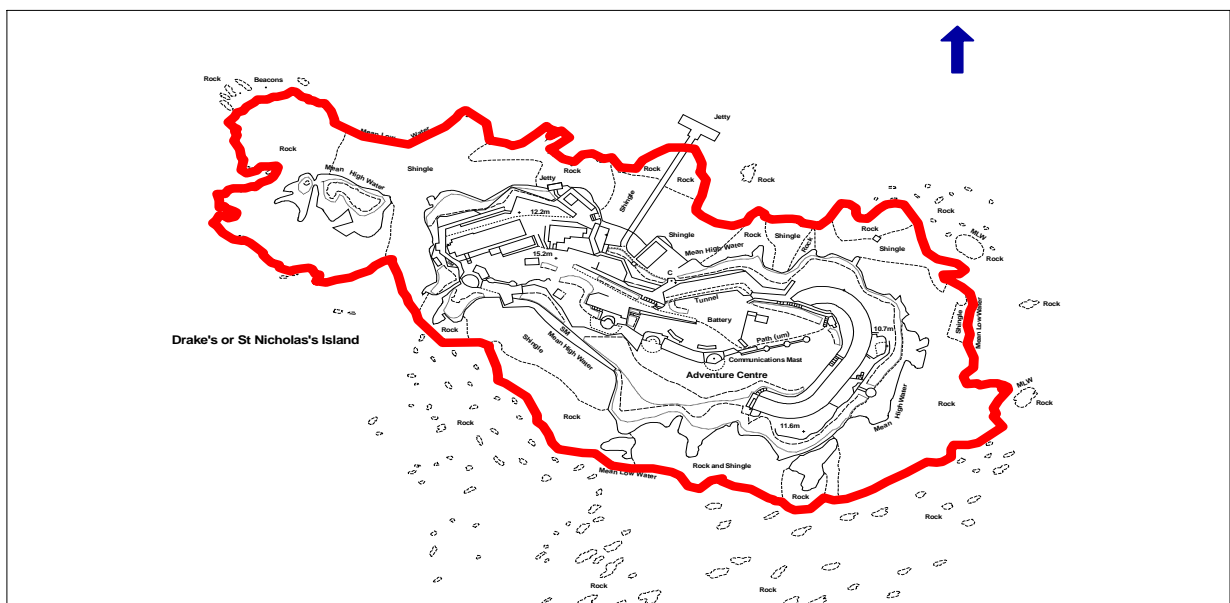
8/13 Week Date: **24/04/2012**

Decision Category: Related to a Major - 5 or more Letters of Representation received

Case Officer : Matt Coombe

Recommendation: Refuse

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Site Description

Drake's Island is located in Plymouth Sound, about 600 metres south of the Hoe. It extends to about 2.6 hectares and is formed of limestone and volcanic rock rising to a height of some 29 metres.

Formerly known as St Nicholas Island, its strategic position on the approach to Sutton Harbour, the Cattewater, Hamoaze and Dockyard led to it being fortified from at least the 16th century. Military use of the island continued until after World War II. From 1963 to 1989, Plymouth City Council obtained a lease from the Crown and operated a youth adventure training centre there. The current owner bought the island from the Crown in 1995. Since then the island buildings have been unused, and have fallen into disrepair.

A large proportion of the island is a designated Scheduled Monument (SAM 12614), comprising three designated areas. At the western end of the island, the designated area includes the main entrance, coastal walls and the western gun battery. A small area in the north-east of the island encloses a small area believed to contain remains of a 16th century artillery tower. The largest area includes the majority of the central and eastern parts of the island, enclosing the casemated batteries of 1860-1, and most of the later artillery batteries and magazines. Although excluded from the Scheduled Monument, the group of four principal buildings occupying the north-west end of the island are Grade II listed. These buildings comprise the 18th and 19th century former Barracks, Ablution Blocks, Commanding Officer's House and Guardhouse.

The range of remains and fortifications, and the prominent location of Drake's Island, make it a heritage site of the greatest importance.

Proposal Description

The proposals seek to carry out conversions and extensions to existing buildings to allow the island to function as a luxury hotel resort. The intention is that the island will be made available not just to hotel residents and guests, but that arrangements will be made to allow controlled access to members of the public.

The proposed development is largely concentrated in three main areas:

- The group of buildings at the western end of the island representing the former residential quarters of soldiers and officers
- The Casemated Battery at the eastern end of the island
- The arrival point on the north side of the island

In brief, the proposals seek to convert the Barrack Block into 25 hotel bedrooms and suites, to convert Island House into bar and restaurant areas, to convert and extend the Ablution Block, to provide spa, gym and swimming pool facilities and to link the three buildings with a highly glazed linking element of contemporary architecture that will provide the core services and the main vertical circulation for the four building elements of the hotel. Space is also allocated for a conference suite, services rooms, staff support and ancillary facilities. Creation of a seating area is proposed to the rear of the Barrack Block, together with a circular viewing

platform and other landscape features. To allow for this space it is proposed that the existing ammunitions store here be demolished.

The Casemated Battery at the east end of the island is proposed for conversion to provide additional hotel accommodation in the form of 19 single and double unit suites, with two “Feature Rooms” restored to reflect their original historic form and made accessible to the public.

The landing jetty at the north side of the island is proposed for repair and refurbishment and the adjacent late 20th century Boat House is proposed for demolition, to be replaced with a modern “Arrival Building” with a “scenic lift” giving access from the jetty level to the main hotel level at the top of the cliff. A boat store is also proposed within the building.

The Design & Access Statement makes reference to the provision of a gravel helipad on the upper part of the island. Here also, it is proposed that historic pathways be uncovered, low-level lighting be added and the area generally be made safe.

It is proposed that overgrown vegetation on the island be cut back. Installation of lighting is proposed for the tunnel and store room network beneath the island, which is to be generally cleaned and repaired but with no major changes.

Pre-Application Enquiry

Prior to application submission, extensive pre-application meetings took place through the Council’s Development Enquiry Service, including detailed discussions focusing on ecology and heritage (with English Heritage involvement). The pre-application process included a site visit to the island – again with English Heritage in attendance – on 17/01/11. The applicant held a day-long public consultation event on the proposal at the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club on 01/12/11 and conducted further pre-application consultation with the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership and other bodies.

Relevant Planning History

99/00981/LBC - Alterations and extensions to Officer's House, Barrack Block, and Ablution Block – REFUSED

99/00980/FUL - Change of use of Casemates to visitor attraction with cafe; Officers House to a tavern/restaurant (together with rear extension); Barrack Block to hotel (together with extension) - REFUSED

Consultation Responses

English Heritage

Supports – in latest response, subject to the following changes:

1. Removal of balcony/patio areas in front of casemate rooms.
2. Full recording of casemate shields, and their careful removal and storage on site.
3. Further discussion on casemate glazing detail.
4. Potential display of a removed shield in room 34.1 to illustrate cross-section, rather than removal of the room's existing shield.
5. Improvement to the detailing of the glazed link element between the Barrack Block, Officer's Building and Ablutions Block.

Representations

At the time of writing the Officer's report, 12 individual representations have been received but none of the comments relate to the application for listed building consent.

Analysis

Planning Policy Position

In the First Deposit Local Plan (FDLP) Proposal 113, Drake's Island was allocated for leisure, recreation and tourism uses, with development to make provisions including for "sensitivity to and enhancement of the island's historic, architectural and nature conservation interests". The FDLP has now been superseded by the adopted Core Strategy. The following Core Strategy policy is relevant: CS03 - Historic Environment. The following Supplementary Planning Document is relevant: Design Supplementary Planning Document (2009). The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) – is also a key consideration.

Impact on Historic Environment

It must be noted that the Council's responsibility as Local Planning Authority, to the historic environment on Drake's Island, extends only to the Listed Buildings and not the Scheduled Ancient Monument (for which English Heritage is the authorising body).

Refurbishment of the jetty and the proposed Arrival Building are considered to have a minimal effect on the island's historic assets and will significantly improve the existing arrangements. The Arrival Building's bold angular design and associated landscaping measures are welcomed, as are the proposals for the gateway approach to the main hotel area.

With regards to the main hotel complex proposed for the Barrack Block/Island House/Ablutions Block, there are two key issues - the loss of original historic fabric and the proposal to "wrap" the buildings into one hotel "core". The proposal requires a significant amount of demolition of existing features and fabric, though the most significant elements to be removed are the three stairways on the southern side of the main Barrack Block. While this is regrettable, this building is only assessed as "moderate" in the Heritage Assessment and the loss is justified in both the Heritage Impact Assessment and English Heritage's letter of 06/03/12 as

necessary to the viability of the development. It is therefore considered that any loss here, and with the Artillery Store, can be mitigated by recording.

Whilst the proposal to “wrap” the buildings around a central glazed “core” is considered to be a sound approach overall, the Local Planning Authority is in agreement with the English Heritage view that the front of the glazed “link block” should be pulled back behind the north frontage of the Island House, to allow this building’s historic elevation to be seen in full. It is understood from the agent, that the applicant may be willing to make this change. However, at the time of writing, amended drawings have not been received and the scheme must be assessed against the submitted information.

There have also been significant negotiations with English Heritage regarding the proposals for the Casemates building – particularly with regards to the proposed loss of a number of cast iron blast shields. The applicant has sought to remove a number of historic blast shields to create larger windows (and therefore allow more light and wider views to the proposed hotel rooms within the Casemates building). English Heritage was initially concerned about the number of blast shields proposed for removal, and this position was recorded in their initial consultation response dated 06/03/12. However, English Heritage has since reviewed this position and has taken the “finely balanced decision” that they are prepared to consider the compromise of the temporary removal of six of the casemate blast shields as proposed, subject to the following changes.

1. Removal of balcony/patio areas in front of casemate rooms.
2. Full recording of casemate shields, and their careful removal and storage on site.
3. Further discussion on casemate glazing detail.
4. Potential display of a removed shield in room 34.I to illustrate cross-section, rather than removal of the room’s existing shield.
5. Improvement to the detailing of the glazed link element between the Barrack Block, Officer’s Building and Ablutions Block.

Once again, it is understood from the agent, that the applicant may be willing to make these changes. Unfortunately however, at the time of writing, amended drawings have not been received.

The proposals are therefore not considered compliant with Policy CS03 (Historic Environment) of the adopted City of Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007).

Human Rights Act

The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, and in particular Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 of the Act itself. This Act gives further effect to the rights included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant’s reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance.

Conclusions

The Local Planning Authority has given strong support for the principle of this proposal and officers have committed a great deal of time to working with the applicant's agent to try and resolve the various issues of concern and move the planning application forward. However, despite repeated advice and requests for updated plans these have not been forthcoming.

In summary, the outstanding concerns with regards to the historic environment are such that this proposal cannot be supported in its current form.

The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Recommendation

In respect of the application dated **24/01/2012** and the submitted drawings 10057 C09.16, 10057 C09.10, 10057 C09.11, 10057 C09.12, 10057 C09.13, 10057 C09.14, 10057 C09.15, 10057 L09.01, 10057 L09.02, 10057 L09.03, 10057 L09.04, 10057 L09.05, 10057 L09.06, 10057 L09.07, 10057 L09.08, 10057 L09.09, 10057 L09.10, 10057 L09.11, 10057 L09.12, 10057 L09.13, 10057 L09.14, 10057 L09.15, 10057 L09.16, 10057 L09.17, 10057 L09.20, 10057 L09.21, 10057 L09.23, 10057 L09.24, 10057 L09.25, 10057 L09.26, 10057 L09.27, 10057 L09.28, 10057 L09.29, 10057 L09.30, 10057 L09.31, 10057 L09.32, 10057 L09.33, 10057 L09.34, 10057 L09.35, 10057 L09.36, 10057 L09.37, 10057 L00.01, 10057 L01.01, 10057 L02.01, 10057 L02.02, 10057 L02.03, 10057 L02.04, 10057 L02.05, 10057 L02.06, 10057 L02.07, 10057 L02.08, 10057 L02.09, 10057 L03.01, 10057 L03.02, 10057 L03.03, 10057 L03.04, 10057 L04.01, 10057 L04.02, 10057 L04.03, 10057 L04.04, 10057 L04.05, 10057 L04.06, 10057 L04.07, 10057 L04.08, 10057 L93.01, 10057 L93.02, 10057 L93.03, Bat Scoping Assessment, Design and Access Statement, Ecologist Report - Drake's Island Species List, Ecologist Report - EclA and Extended Phase I Habitat Survey, Ecologist Report - Phase I Habitat Survey, Ecologist Report - Phase I Habitat Survey Legend, Environmental Statement with Appendices, Heritage Assessment, Heritage Assessment Appendix One Gazetteer, Heritage Impact Assessment, Inter-Tidal Habitat Assessment, Drakes Hotel Travel Plan, Flood Risk Assessment, Foul Drainage Strategy, Phase I Environmental Assessment, Transport Statement, Transport Statement Part 2, Tree Report - Tree Constraints Plan – East, Tree Report - Tree Constraints Plan – West, Tree Report - Tree Constraints Plan Report, it is recommended to: **Refuse**

Reasons for Refusal

NEGATIVE IMPACT ON HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

(1) The Local Planning Authority considers that the design of the central glazed core building linking the Barrack Block, Officer's Building and Ablutions Block has a negative impact on the adjacent listed buildings, and wider historic setting of the island and landscape, by virtue of its footprint, massing, external appearance and use of materials. The proposals are therefore not compliant with Policy CS03 (Historic Environment) of the adopted City of Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007).

Relevant Policies

The following (a) policies of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007 and supporting Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents (the status of these documents is set out within the City of Plymouth Local Development Scheme) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (until this is statutorily removed from the legislation) and (b) relevant Government Policy Statements and Government Circulars, were taken into account in determining this application:

CS03 - Historic Environment

SPD3 - Design Supplementary Planning Document

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework March 2012