

Planning approval for Charlotte Square

Historic town houses to become 'grade A' office space

Four historic town houses in the West End will be brought back into use as 'grade A' office space after developers were given the green lights by councillors to refurbish the listed buildings.

Fordell Estates will refurbish the A-listed buildings on the west side of Charlotte Square into usable business premises – as the next step in the firm's vision to revitalise the western part of the New Town.

As part of the proposals, two extensions will be built to the rear of the buildings, which date back to 1803. A glass auditorium will be constructed, along with a pavilion. The roof dormers will be removed from the front of the building, classed as a "conservation gain" by officers, while minor alterations will take place internally.

Planning officers said the proposals "will create a very good scheme in the restoration of these category A listed buildings" and labelled it a "positive use".

Cllr Joanna Mowat said: "I'm actually very relaxed about this. I think there's more positives than there are negatives. These are very important buildings. The great gain is getting these continuing as grade A offices.

"They feel like fairly significant alterations but when you look at the fabric of the building, a very small amount is being lost to facilitate grade A office space to continue."

She added: "It's a top office location, which is what Charlotte Square has become. I think it's important for the city and for the heritage of the city, to maintain that mix of purpose-built grade A office space in other areas and Charlotte Square – which used to have more money moving through it than anywhere else in the rest of Europe, as a finance centre and a finance hub.

"We know there are businesses in Edinburgh looking for this quality of accommodation. The fact we will maintain this as top end office accommodation which preserves the building going forward, I think is an important win."

Fordell Estates is part of an international investment fund and owns The Charlotte Square Collection, a managed estate of 21 properties on the square.

A spokeswoman for The Charlotte Square Collection said: "We're delighted to have been granted planning permission for the renovation of four more town houses on Charlotte Square. Since its formation in 2010, The Charlotte Square Collection has undertaken substantial improvements to 14 properties on Charlotte Square resulting in over 25 businesses relocating to the historic square bringing over 700 permanent jobs.

"We approach every property refurbishment with the same exceptionally high standards, with historic conservation at the heart of the investment philosophy.

"The grant of planning permission for numbers 20-23 enables us to continue the rejuvenation of Charlotte Square and will further cement its position as the most prestigious office address in Scotland."



Planning Convener Cllr Neil Gardiner

Planning convener, Cllr Neil Gardiner, said: “Initially I was concerned about the loss of the A-listed building’s roof.

“All these decisions are balanced and I personally think that on balance, I can support this.

“Ultimately, these changes to an A-listed building can largely be turned back. The pavilion, in years to come, could potentially be removed and car parking could be removed from the courtyard in the longer term if that’s the direction of travel – it’s not irretrievable.”