

Former naval premises to be converted into affordable new homes

Abandoned World War One premises in South Queensferry which have stunning views of the bridges, will be converted into nearly 50 new affordable homes.

Work will begin to redevelop buildings at the derelict naval base at Port Edgar, under the Queensferry Crossing, after the plans were given the go-ahead by councillors.

As part of the project the old guard's house will be turned into a serviced holiday apartment, while the former air raid shelter will become a 'children's play feature' in a bid to retain elements of the site's historical significance.

Some small buildings will be demolished to achieve an "acceptable residential layout" however all the main two-storey accommodation blocks will be kept in place and renovated to form 49 mid-market flats and a 'café/restaurant'.

The brick built barracks were in use by the navy until 1927 and thereafter were repurposed as a holiday camp for unemployed people, a minesweeper training base, storage and assembly for the construction of the Forth Road Bridge until it was completed in 1964, and a storage site for the Museum of Scotland before it was completely vacated while the Queensferry Crossing was built. The site has also been "subject to vandalism".

Developers Lar Housing based in Dunfermline, which specialises in providing “affordable rent housing specifically in high demand areas”, said it had held discussions with the police about installing “temporary measures” to address “historic anti-social behaviour in and around the site”. The company was set up in 2015 with government funding and is now chaired by former MSP and Presiding Officer, Ken Macintosh.

In plans lodged with the council the company said all the two-storey accommodation blocks were “of robust construction” and “in reasonable structural condition”.

It added: “The site and existing buildings have been carefully analysed and the design carried out to achieve a successful residential development by reusing the existing buildings, prioritising retention of listed buildings in favour of demolition and new buildings.

“The selective demolition is proposed only where absolutely necessary to meet the requirements of the Edinburgh Design guide to make a successful residential use of the site.

“Lar has received extremely positive feedback so far from the local community, local, and national organisations for the proposed redevelopment of this site.

“As a conversion of existing derelict buildings, this site can be delivered in much shorter time-scales than new-build developments, which will assist in the much needed delivery of new, affordable, energy efficient homes, whilst delivering green homes by removing carbon emissions from construction by retaining the embodied carbon in the existing buildings rather than demolishing and constructing new buildings.”

Council planners recommended the plans for approval with a direction that the developers pay nearly £800,000 towards local education, healthcare and transport infrastructure.

Councillors on the Development Management Sub-Committee

unanimously granted planning permission on Wednesday.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

