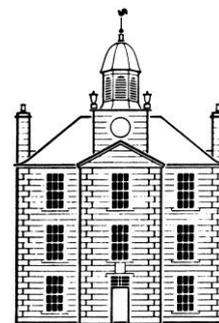


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THE ARCHITECTURAL
HERITAGE SOCIETY
OF SCOTLAND

*For the study and
protection of Scottish
architecture*

Emma Wilson
Development Management
The City of Edinburgh Council
G1 Waverley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh EH8 8BG

08 November 2010

Dear Ms Wilson,

E43/05 Fountain Brewery 10/02955/LBC 10/02955/PPP

The Society objects to the proposed demolition of the former offices of the North British Rubber Company to create a simplified masterplan for brewery site at Fountainbridge. Although a Heritage Statement has been supplied, no RIAS Conservation Accredited architect appears to be employed by the practice which brings in to question the quality of the advice provided.

The nineteenth century offices have lost their industrial context and we would argue that this increases rather than diminishes their architectural value. The building was listed in 1998 nearly twenty years after the fire and subsequent demolition that destroyed its industrial context. Therefore the reasons for listing remain as valid now as they did then. The building's importance remains its architectural record of a major part of Edinburgh's, or of Scotland's, industrial manufacturing history.

Henry Lee Norris brought 4 staff from New York to Scotland in 1856 having purchased the patent for rubber manufacturing using the sulphur vulcanization process from Charles Goodyear. Failing to find premises in Glasgow he took over the Castle Silk Mills on the Union Canal and within 13 years was employing a staff of 600. The Mills supplied vast quantities of rubber items for soldiers in both world wars and we recommend you spend some time reading the history of the company and the recollections of former staff at www.nbrinklies.com. The loss of a smoke belching factory from the city centre may not be regrettable to the amenity of the area but the reduction of any architectural heritage to only the Leamington Lift Bridge and Union Canal would be remiss on the part of the City

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Council. It is notable that in determining the importance of the building the Close Historical Association (8.19) of the Heritage Statement is barely developed. The offices are an important record of the site and Fountainbridge's connection with the early days of the industrial revolution. The interior Edwardian refit is part of the building's narrative and indicative of the increasing success of the North British Rubber Company. Demolition to meet, in part, the aspiration of wider pavements (9.09) of the Development Brief would be crass.

The main determinant for demolition appears to be the desire for a cleared site without examining the reasons for the positions of the existing roads. We would refer you Kirkwood's 1817 plan of Edinburgh which shows that Gilmore Park follows the boundary between the lands of James Haig Esq and The Property of the Trade's Maidens Hospital. Streets tend to outlive buildings and are records of much earlier patterns of settlement, or in the case agriculture and it would be deeply regrettable were this boundary that is more than 2 centuries old were to be erased for a fantasy "urban village". The industrial blocks are at present impermeable but it does not require the demolition of this building to improve this, and it could be argued that the triangular perimeter blocks proposed are alien to the rectilinear grain of the area.

As the remainder of site under development is large and has no other restrictions we do not think that the retention and re-use of the NBRCO offices is onerous, particularly when it will provide the area with some form of material continuity rather than a scorched earth approach. Good 'place making' does not require a tabula rasa and the nineteenth century office block is very much part of the 'sense of place' that Fountainbridge has. According to Policy ENV2 of the ECLP demolitions of listed buildings will only be accepted in "exceptional circumstances" and we contend that there is no pressing requirement for the loss of this building and therefore encourage you to refuse consent.

Yours sincerely

Euan Leitch
On behalf of
Forth & Borders Cases Panel