



Item: 4

Planning Committee: 25 March 2026.

Proposed Alteration and Extension of Office Building, Change of Use to Mixed Use Facility, Extension of Car Parking, and Associated Infrastructure and Landscaping at Orkney Research and Innovation Campus, Stromness.

Report by Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.

1. Overview

- 1.1. This report considers an application for alteration and extension of the Orkney Research and Innovation Campus (ORIC) at the former Stromness Academy, Back Road, Stromness. The application is a resubmission with amendments, following refusal of planning permission 23/458/PP in July 2025. The works include the alteration and three storey extension of the existing Block 3. A change of use is proposed to the building as extended, to create a mixed-use food and drink (Class 3), office (Class 4) and education (Class 10) facility, to be used in conjunction with the wider campus. The works also comprise the installation of six air source heat pumps to serve the extended building, and the installation of external wall insulation and air source heat pumps to the Charles Clouston Building. To the south of the site, proposed works include the reconfiguration and significant extension of existing car parking. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure would be installed, alongside associated hard and soft landscaping, including construction of a ramp and steps at the north-east corner of the campus.
- 1.2. A total of 12 valid representations have been submitted. Of those, eight submitted are in objection, and four in support.
- 1.3. The development would impact the setting of Stromness given the prominence of the site. This includes the setting of Stromness Conservation Area, and in the context that the site is located within the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area. The functional benefits to the educational campus are balanced against impacts on the townscape and adjacent properties. Relevant to those considerations are the detailed design, of external finishes in combination with the scale and form of the building. It is considered that the development complies with relevant policies, and that objections and other material considerations do not merit refusal of the application.

Application Reference:	25/353/PP.
Application Type:	Planning Permission.
Proposal:	Alter and extend office building (Block 3) including three storey extension and change of use, to create a mixed-use food and drink (Class 3), office (Class 4) and education (Class 10) facility, install six air source heat pumps, install external wall insulation and air source heat pumps (Charles Clouston Building and Robert Rendall Building), construct car parking, install electric vehicle charging infrastructure, associated hard and soft landscaping including construction of steps and external lift (resubmission of 23/458/PP)
Applicant:	Highlands and Islands Enterprise.
Agent:	HRI Architects, c/o Gavin Fraser, HRI Munro, 62 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1LP.

- 1.4. All application documents (including plans, consultation responses and valid representations) are available for members to view [here](#) (click on “Accept and Search” to confirm the Disclaimer and Copyright document has been read and understood, and then enter the application number given above).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
- i. Approve the application for planning permission in respect of the proposed alteration and extension of an office building, change of use to a mixed-use facility, extension of car parking, and associated infrastructure and landscaping at the Orkney Research and Innovation Campus, Back Road, Stromness, subject to the conditions detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Consultations

Engineering Services

- 3.1. The response acknowledged the previous application, where the drainage design for the site had been agreed, and noted the acceptable adjustments made to accommodate the amended design.
- 3.2. “The drainage calculations provided alongside the current application have had minor adjustments to account for changes to the footprint of the building and new car parking area. However, all other aspects of the previously accepted design are

the same and the outputs are considered acceptable up to and including the 1 in 200 year rainfall event with 40% uplift to account for climate change. We therefore do not object to this application.”

Roads Services (January 2026)

- 3.3. “Roads Services object to this development proposal due to the removal of a section of the existing footway that runs from Back Road down into the Old Academy Car Park. The development proposal effectively removes a section of the footway to the rear of ‘Block 3’, thereby removing safe pedestrian access to the lower section of the car park which is unacceptable.

The information provided also indicates that existing section of footway on the south eastern gable of ‘Block 3’ is to be changed to shared surface construction, thereby almost entirely removing safe pedestrian access from Back Road to the lower section of the car park.”

Roads Services (March 2026)

- 3.4. The earlier objection is removed, subject to the requirement for suspensive conditions to secure additional details for approval.
- 3.5. “The drawings noted below are generally acceptable as they now indicate that footway access down to the lower section of the car park will be maintained, however there are some detail that need some further information.

Drawing Title	Drawing No	Revision No
Ground Floor-GA	120	07
First Floor-GA	121	07
Second Floor-GA	122	07

In consideration of the overall site there are several points that either need to be addressed prior to any planning permission being granted, or that could be conditioned, provided that the information required or design changes are made and submitted for approval prior to any works commencing on the development.

- Construction details for all areas marked in red on the Car Parking Plan drawing.
- 500 Rev 05 as ‘crossing with contrasting surface’, Pedestrian zone’ and the area at the top of the existing steps below the Charles Clouston Building.

- Details of the proposal affecting Franklin Road detailed on the ‘Proposed Paved Courtyard + Shared Surface’ indicated on the Proposed Site / Block Plan drawing 003 Rev 6, as ‘Proposed Paved Courtyard + Shared Surface’, as the proposal may not be acceptable on the adopted public road.
- Construction details of the proposed shared surface are in front of Block 3 that is indicated on several drawings is required for consideration.
- There is a section of ‘dwarf wall’ that juts out into the car park area in front of Block 3, there are concerns that this section of wall could prove problematic for vehicles using the car park, therefore this element of the development proposal should be revised to remove the hazard.
- There is short section of ‘dwarf wall’ to the front of the planting area in front of Block 3, details of the wall must be provided for consideration as the wall may present a hazard if it cannot be seen by drivers reversing out of the parking spaces opposite the section of wall.
- Details of the proposed boundary between the hard and soft landscaping with the car park area are required for further comment or approval.
- There are a few elements of the lighting proposal for this development that will need to be amended as the lighting proposal as submitted is unacceptable.

In addition to the above points conditions should also be applied that requires a construction phase management plan to be submitted, including site accommodation, storage areas, traffic routes, expected traffic volumes for all vehicles and plant required to carry out the project and for parking vehicles for site staff. A condition that will require the new section of car park to be constructed and operational prior to any work commencing on the redevelopment of Block 3, and Roads Services standard road condition survey condition and informative as noted below.”

Scottish Water

- 3.6. “Scottish Water has no objection to this planning application”.

Orkney Heritage Society

- 3.7. “This application represents a major investment for Stromness, which, on the face of it, is welcome. An investment of this scale in the environs of Stromness, however, needs to be done well and we have some concerns that this application does not meet the high standards required. OHS is relieved that the height of the major buildings have been reduced, but question the architectural merit of the overall scheme which apes the poorly executed Robert Rendall building.

There are also several specific points that OHS would wish to draw attention to:

Choice of materials.

The use of metal sheeting and galvanised mesh to enclose the heat pumps is questioned.

Such materials seem inappropriate for such a seaside/salty location and seem to have been poorly chosen for such a corrosive atmosphere.

Re-use of stone is encouraged, especially if the out of character black slate walls built in the last phase are over laid. They are completely out of keeping and poorly executed with seepage of cement additives staining the material.

Note: It is understood that the planning authorities failed to ensure the choice of material was a planning condition and therefore failed to get the developer to adhere to the concept design submitted. It is hoped that such oversight can be corrected now or at least prevented in future by suitable attention to enforcement detail. To be fair to the planning officers, nobody expected such a poor choice of material last time, however the developer has proven themselves unreliable on this matter and so should not be afforded latitude again.

Drainage.

The lack of consideration of the drainage of the condensate from the heatpumps is potentially dangerous. They will lead to areas of chilled air and will give rise to condensate which can freeze unless properly accommodated. The lack of drainage is a concern as this is a basic requirement and therefore throws into question the competence of the design. OHS would therefore urge OIC to make sure that the detailing of such measures is competent and would draw attention back to our earlier concerns as to the potential for noise.

EV charging

The scheme claims to be installing EV charging, but in fact reduces the number of chargers on site from 9 to 4.

The scheme does not reflect the likely needs to provide ubiquitous low powered EV charging for such an important town centre car park. The imminent 20 fold increase in EVs that will be occasioned by the electrification of the domestic fleet will require more chargers and this scheme shows no attempt to enable this. Given the congested nature of the main areas of Stromness it is critical that this opportunity is taken to enable that later provision of additional chargers. Scottish

Government guidance already requires that car parks and cart courts be provided with a ratio of chargers to spaces that the scheme fails to deliver. In addition good practice would require that ducts be placed to each parking space to allow the simple installation of chargers at a later date, but without the cost of digging up the car park again.

Lighting.

Lighting plan seems to be predicated on light poles, but there seems to have been little attention to the lighting of stairs and paths. This was omitted in the last scheme and has led to dangerous unlit steps in deep shadow. It is unclear if the client has bothered to learn from the past experience. Furthermore the prominence of the site means that 'dark skies' standards should be adhered to in all external lighting.

Road Safety:

No reference to exiting dangerous exit onto Back Road occasioned by inadequate visibility to the east. It is surprising that the highway department has not drawn attention to this oversight left from when the 'Old Academy' site was first re-developed.

Car park

Poor design of car additional parking. Plans fail to take account of the sloping site and the opportunity to put in multiple levels of car-parking, possibly even segregating local public parking provision from more ORIC oriented space by use of a lower level entrance from Franklin Road. This is suggested in Visioning Page 5, but then appears to have been dropped by the scheme promoter."

Environmental Health

- 3.8. "From the details, it is our understanding that the developer wishes to install ASHP's across a number of locations on the site. Information has been supplied as to the make and type of ASHP's to be used.

It is also noted that there are plans for a mixed use area inclusive of a facility for food and drink which may or may not require refrigeration and ventilation equipment. Furthermore, other plant rooms are indicated. There appears to be no noise details for these at this stage.

Therefore on this basis Environmental Health recommend that the following condition be applied should permission be granted."

NatureScot

- 3.9. NatureScot confirmed that at the scale proposed, the development would not raise issues of national interest in relation to its landscape, visual or cumulative effects, and in terms of any such effects, NatureScot does not judge those as meeting its threshold in respect of its national remit for landscapes. Comment was also made in relation to detailing used to minimise impact, “We consider there to be sufficient design considerations proposed to reduce the prominence of the development and integrate it with the surrounding townscape, namely the consideration of scale and use of timber clad 'fins' to reduce reflectivity of the façade.”

4. Representations

- 4.1. A total of 12 valid representations have been submitted. It should be noted that, where more than one representation is received from a household, it is defined as one ‘valid representation’. There are incidences of multiple letters from a single person, and separate representations from multiple individuals within a single household. So, whilst less than the total number of individual letters received, 12, is the correct number of ‘valid representations’. Of those, eight submitted are in objection, and four in support.
- 4.2. Eight valid representations (objections) have been received from:
- Archibald Paterson, Ashburn, Strathsteven, Brora, KW9 6NL.
 - Dr CW and Mrs IM Borland, Bea House, Back Road, Stromness, KW16 3AW.
 - Eilidh McIntosh, 157 Maxwell Avenue, Bearsden, Glasgow, G61 1HT.
 - Gavin Beardmore, 639 Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 3RZ.
 - Graham Borland, 34 Hunters Way, Lochwinnoch, PA12 4BX.
 - Joe Goldblatt, 15 / 6 East Parkside, Edinburgh, EH16 5XL.
 - Neil Kermod, Quarry House, Finstown, KW17 2JY.
 - Pauline Figliolini, 10 Kirkburn, Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire, AB30 1LG.
- 4.3. Four valid representations (supporting comment) have been received from:
- EMEC, c/o Cath Russell, Charles Clouston Building, Stromness, KW16 3AW.
 - ICIT Heriot-Watt University, c/o Dr Sandy Kerr, Franklin Road, Stromness, KW16 3AN.
 - Robert Gordon University, c/o Nick Fyfe, Garthdee Road, Aberdeen, AB10 7QB
 - Stromness Community Council, c/o Sandra Craigie, Billia Smari, Outertown, Stromness, KW16 3JP.

4.4. Representations in objection are on the following grounds:

- Loss of public parking spaces.
- Increase in traffic.
- Effects on neighbouring businesses – amenity, overlooking, overshadowing, privacy, impact on rental appeal.
- Residential amenity issues – overlooking, privacy, overshadowing, loss of daylight, noise pollution, increased traffic, and odour.
- Scale, massing, and dominant profile are out of character with the townscape, causing harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of Stromness.
- Threat to the physical beauty of the area, which is integral to the experience of residents, visitors, and long-term guests.
- All parking spaces should have ducting for EV chargers.
- Inclusion of dining facilities will reduce footfall in the street.
- Affects the amenity of the conservation area.
- Noise and smells.
- The site is of significant historic and cultural value to the community; impact on the Stromness Conservation Area and the National Scenic Area.
- Incompatible with the setting, and out of keeping with the character of Stromness.
- The scale and form are excessive.
- Decrease in footfall, which would result in increased pressures on local businesses.
- Construction pollution.

4.5. Representations also include necessity of development, the nature of the applicant, use of public funds, and land ownership. None of these matters are material planning considerations, and as such do not form part of the determination.

4.6. Representations in support of the application raised the following matters:

- Support for the expansion of the campus, including potential to create functional, modern spaces for tenant organisations.
- Opportunity to strengthen the identity and connectivity of the campus by linking existing buildings.
- The development represents a positive step in showcasing the innovative work taking place in Stromness.
- Increased retention of original façade (compared to previous scheme).
- Parking concerns addressed.
- Use of subdued colours in the setting.

- Creating an asset for existing tenants, new businesses and research, and the community.

5. Relevant Planning History

5.1. Planning applications

Reference	Proposal	Location	Decision	Date
23/458/PP.	Alter and extend office building (Block 3) including three storey extension with roof terrace, and change of use, to create a mixed-use food and drink (Class 3), office (Class 4) and education (Class 10) facility, install six air source heat pumps, install external wall insulation and air source heat pumps (Charles Clouston Building), reconfigure and construct car parking, install electric vehicle charging infrastructure, associated hard and soft landscaping including construction of a ramp and steps, and install air source	ORIC LLP, The Charles Clouston Building, Orkney Research And Innovation Campus, Back Road, Stromness.	Refuse.	30.07.25.

Reference	Proposal	Location	Decision	Date
	heat pumps (Robert Rendall Building).			
19/433/PP.	Install replacement windows, and works to courtyard and entrance (resubmission of 19/301/PP).	Old Academy, Back Road, Stromness.	Approve.	01.03.20.
19/405/PP.	Install five electric vehicle charge points.	Old Academy, Back Road, Stromness.	Approve.	17.04.20.
19/301/PP.	Install replacement windows, and works to courtyard and entrance.	Old Academy, Back Road, Stromness.	Refuse.	15.11.19.
17/178/PP.	Extend, remodel existing main entrance, create a new entrance and hard landscaping.	Old Academy, Back Road, Stromness.	Approve.	03.10.17.
15/014/PP.	Change of use from office to education facility, install replacement door and install an air source heat pump.	Old Academy Business Centre, Back Road, Stromness.	Approve.	05.03.15.
02/350/PPF.	Change of Use, Part of Old Academy, Class 10 to Class 4.	Old Academy, Stromness.	Approve.	07.10.02.

6. Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

- 6.1. The full text of the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017 and supplementary guidance can be read on the Council website [here](#).
- 6.2. National Planning Framework 4 can be read on the Scottish Government website [here](#).
- 6.3. The key policies, supplementary guidance and planning policy advice listed below are relevant to this application:
 - National Planning Framework 4:
 - Policy 2. Climate mitigation and adaptation.
 - Policy 3. Biodiversity.
 - Policy 7. Historic assets and places.
 - Policy 14. Design, quality and place.
 - Policy 22. Flood risk and water management.
 - Policy 27. City, town, local and commercial centres.
 - Orkney Local Development Plan 2017:
 - Policy 1: Criteria for All Development.
 - Policy 2: Design.
 - Policy 3: Settlements, Town Centres and Primary Retail Frontages.
 - Policy 8: Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage.
 - Policy 9: Natural Heritage and Landscape.
 - Policy 13: Flood Risk, SuDS and Waste Water Drainage.
 - Policy 14: Transport, Travel and Road Network Infrastructure.

7. Legislative Position

- 7.1. Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended (the Act) states, “Where, in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination is, unless material considerations indicate otherwise...to be made in accordance with that plan...”
- 7.2. Annex A of Planning Circular 3/2013: ‘development management procedures’ provides advice on defining a material consideration, and following a House of Lords’ judgement with regards the legislative requirement for decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the development plan, confirms the following interpretation: “If a proposal accords with the development plan and there are no material considerations indicating that it should be refused, permission should be granted. If the proposal does not accord with the

development plan, it should be refused unless there are material considerations indicating that it should be granted.”

7.3. Annex A continues as follows:

- The House of Lords’ judgement also set out the following approach to deciding an application:
 - Identify any provisions of the development plan which are relevant to the decision.
 - Interpret them carefully, looking at the aims and objectives of the plan as well as detailed wording of policies.
 - Consider whether or not the proposal accords with the development plan.
 - Identify and consider relevant material considerations for and against the proposal.
 - Assess whether these considerations warrant a departure from the development plan.
- There are two main tests in deciding whether a consideration is material and relevant:
 - It should serve or be related to the purpose of planning. It should therefore relate to the development and use of land.
 - It should relate to the particular application.
- The decision maker will have to decide what considerations it considers are material to the determination of the application. However, the question of whether or not a consideration is a material consideration is a question of law and so something which is ultimately for the courts to determine. It is for the decision maker to assess both the weight to be attached to each material consideration and whether individually or together they are sufficient to outweigh the development plan. Where development plan policies are not directly relevant to the development proposal, material considerations will be of particular importance.
- The range of considerations which might be considered material in planning terms is very wide and can only be determined in the context of each case. Examples of possible material considerations include:
 - Scottish Government policy and UK Government policy on reserved matters.
 - The National Planning Framework.
 - Designing Streets.

- Scottish Government planning advice and circulars.
- EU policy.
- A proposed local development plan or proposed supplementary guidance.
- Community plans.
- The environmental impact of the proposal.
- The design of the proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings.
- Access, provision of infrastructure and planning history of the site.
- Views of statutory and other consultees.
- Legitimate public concern or support expressed on relevant planning matters.
- The planning system operates in the long term public interest. It does not exist to protect the interests of one person or business against the activities of another. In distinguishing between public and private interests, the basic question is whether the proposal would unacceptably affect the amenity and existing use of land and buildings which ought to be protected in the public interest, not whether owners or occupiers of neighbouring or other existing properties would experience financial or other loss from a particular development.

7.4. Where a decision to refuse an application is made, the applicant may appeal under section 47 of the Act. Scottish Ministers are empowered to make an award of expenses on appeal where one party's conduct is deemed to be unreasonable. Examples of such unreasonable conduct are given in Circular 6/1990 and include:

- Failing to give complete, precise and relevant reasons for refusal of an application.
- Reaching a decision without reasonable planning grounds for doing so.
- Not taking into account material considerations.
- Refusing an application because of local opposition, where that opposition is not founded upon valid planning grounds.

7.5. An award of expenses may be substantial where an appeal is conducted either by way of written submissions or a local inquiry.

Status of the Local Development Plan

7.6. Although the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017 is “out-of-date” and has been since April 2022, it is still a significant material consideration when considering planning applications. The primacy of the plan should be maintained until a new

plan is adopted. However, the weight to be attached to the Plan will be diminished where policies within the plan are subsequently superseded.

Status of National Planning Framework 4

- 7.7. National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13 February 2023, following approval by the Scottish Parliament in January 2023. The statutory development plan for Orkney consists of NPF4 and the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017 and its supplementary guidance. In the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017, NPF4 is to prevail as it was adopted later. It is important to note that NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole, and that the intent of each of the 33 policies is set out in NPF4 and can be used to guide decision-making.
- 7.8. In the current case, there is not considered to be any incompatibility between the provisions of NPF4 and the provisions of the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017, to merit any detailed assessment in relation to individual NPF4 policies.

8. Assessment

- 8.1. As noted in section 1 above, planning permission is sought for the alteration and extension of ORIC at the former Stromness Academy, Back Road, Stromness, as indicated in the Location Plan attached as Appendix 2 to this report. The works include the alteration and extension of the existing Block 3, and change of use of the building as extended, to create a mixed-use food and drink (Class 3), office (Class 4) and education (Class 10) facility, to be used in conjunction with the wider campus. The application is the resubmission of the development, having been amended following refusal by the Planning Committee in June 2025. The works also comprise the installation of air source heat pumps, and the installation of external wall insulation and air source heat pumps to the Charles Clouston Building. To the south of the site, proposed works include the reconfiguration and significant extension of existing car parking. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure would be installed, alongside associated hard and soft landscaping, including construction of a ramp and steps at the north-east corner of the campus.
- 8.2. The application site is within the settlement boundary of Stromness. It is within the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area and is adjacent to the Stromness Conservation Area, and forming a key element of its setting, particularly when viewed from land immediately adjacent or in a long view of the town centre from the sea or Garson to the east.

- 8.3. ORIC is a research and innovation campus including businesses and further education providers, and acts as a hub for a range of energy and low carbon expertise. The campus comprises the Robert Rendall Building in the former primary school, and in the old academy buildings, the Charles Clouston Building. The focus of the current application relates to the refurbishment and extension of the building known as Block 3, a detached two-storey traditionally constructed stone building with a slate roof and timber sash and case windows, located at the northern end of the Old Academy. The southern end of the campus is currently vacant and sloping towards Franklin Road. It is proposed to extend the existing car park to the south, and to that vacant area, and for the parking layout to be amended.

Principle

- 8.4. Policy 27 'City, town, local and commercial centres' of NPF4 encourages, promotes and facilitates development in town centres, with a policy outcome of creating centres that are vibrant, healthy, creative, enterprising, accessible and resilient places for people to live, learn, work, enjoy and visit. The Policy notes that proposals for uses which would generate significant footfall, including education facilities, are supported in existing town centres. That aligns with Policy 3 'Settlements, Town Centres and Primary Retail Frontages' of the Local Development Plan which applies a Town Centre First Principle, so that facilities which attract significant footfall are focused on town centre locations. The expansion of the campus, including building extension and reconfiguration of the grounds, is therefore acceptable in principle.

Access and Parking

- 8.5. The extension to Block 3 has two main effects in terms of car parking provision: firstly, it is in-part built within an existing car park and so results in the loss of those parking spaces, and secondly, it is a relatively large extension over multiple floors, and creates its own parking demand.
- 8.6. The issue of the car parking provision was addressed during consideration of the previous planning application for the site, with regards the National Roads Development Guide as specified in Policy 14 'Transport, Travel and Road Network Structure' of the Local Development Plan. The additional car parking to the south provides sufficient additional parking spaces to satisfy Roads Services.
- 8.7. It is also relevant in terms of parking provision that the development is in the town centre, and public transport is available in the vicinity. The local road network is also raised in objection; Roads Services has no objections in relation to additional

traffic or the safety of road users. Similarly, no objection is received from Roads Services in terms of pedestrian safety, including in relation to proposed amended pedestrian access arrangements and to the campus.

- 8.8. Critical to the final position of Roads Services, in terms of confirming no objection, is a requirement for suspensive planning conditions to cover a range of matters including constructions details, surfacing details, dwarf walls, boundaries within the site, and lighting design. A Construction Phase Management Plan is also required, including phasing and management of the existing public car park. There are no outstanding matters that would require a material change to the development as proposed, or that cannot be addressed by submission of information.

Residential Amenity - Noise

- 8.9. Noise during operation of the extended campus facilities is not anticipated to be significantly different from the campus as it exists currently, in terms of typical activities carried out. Noise from air source heat pumps would be controlled by planning condition, and Environmental Health has no objection. Construction works would also be subject to planning condition, including hours of work and a Construction Method Statement. In terms of noise, the development is therefore considered to comply with Policy 1 'Criteria for All Development' of the Local Development Plan.

Residential Amenity - Privacy and Overlooking

- 8.10. The proposed extension is located to the north of Block 3, towards the boundary with the public footpath. Most windows face east, over Franklin Road and towards the sea. In that direction, adequate separation comprising the campus grounds and public road is provided between the building and any neighbouring houses. To the north, the proposed two and a half-storey part of the extension has windows facing towards the neighbouring property which is a house with a self-catering unit in its grounds. Windows in that north elevation are limited to ground floor, which is partly excavated into the slope and behind the boundary wall, and first floor windows which are high level to avoid any overlooking. A roof terrace included in the design iteration of the previous application is omitted in the current design, ensuring no overlooking from any outside space on the building.

Residential Amenity – Daylight and Sunlight

- 8.11. Impact on daylight is a key part of the objection from the neighbouring property to the north, mainly in terms of the self-catering unit in the grounds. This is principally due to the scale and proximity of the block of the extension at the north end of the site, and the vicinity of the self-catering unit to the south boundary of the neighbouring property. This matter was raised in representations in relation to the previous application, and a daylighting and sunlighting analysis was requested by the Planning Authority.
- 8.12. That analysis included impact on daylight, sunlight and outlook in rooms in nearby dwellings where daylight is required, following the recommendations set in Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidance 209 on daylight, sunlight and outlook: “Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight - A guide to good practice [second edition]”. The daylighting analysis measured reduction in the total amount of skylight to a room by finding the Vertical Sky Component (VSC) at the centre of each main window. Two main windows in the self-catering unit were analysed – the ground floor kitchen window and the angled rooflight of the first-floor bedroom. The proposed development passed the recommendations set out in the BR 209 guidance, as included in tables within the submitted analysis, and on that basis, daylight and sunlight impact were not concluded as unacceptable.
- 8.13. The design has been amended since the last application, in part to address issues raised during consideration of the previous application. It does not satisfy the neighbours/objectors to the north, who have suggested, “relocation of block 3 extension away from the northmost boundary as even a change of 2 metres would reduce the substantial visual impact from Camusbeag and allow direct sunlight for up to an additional 3 hours”; the distance of the development from the north boundary has not been amended. However, the ridge of the north part of the development has been reduced relative to that of the previous application, and as proposed is approximately 2.2 metres lower than assessed previously (approximately 38.4 metres above ordnance datum (mAOD), compared to approximately 40.7 mAOD previously). In terms of daylighting and sunlighting, the development is considered to accord with Policy 1 ‘Criteria for All Development’ of the Local Development Plan.

Surface Water Drainage

- 8.14. The applicant commissioned a drainage engineer for the surface water drainage design and calculations. The submission includes a detailed description of the proposed drainage system, including surface water, SuDS and alterations to the

existing drainage, and explanation of the strategy to divert surface water from the northern end to the southern end of the development. Maintenance responsibilities and schedules of the maintenance are also provided, to be carried out by the appropriate responsible organisation(s) for all surface water drainage elements including SuDS devices.

- 8.15. Topography and ground conditions at the southern end of the site added to the complexity of the surface water drainage design. Notwithstanding this, the Drainage Statement and associated drawings meet the requirements of Engineering Services. The development therefore accords with Policy 22 'Flood risk and water management' of NPF4, and Policy 13 'Flood Risk, SuDS and Waste Water Drainage' of the Local Development Plan.

Landscaping and Biodiversity Enhancement

- 8.16. In conjunction with the proposed car park alterations and the ground works required to create the additional car parking at the southern end of the site, a Landscaping Strategy is proposed. This is in part to meet design, appearance and landscaping requirements from a visual perspective, but also to incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures as required by Policy 3 'Biodiversity' of NPF4.
- 8.17. The approach taken to landscaping is appropriate, including wildflower meadow creation, and planting of shrubs, hedging and trees, mainly around the additional car parking, but also the eastern boundary to Franklin Road and around the extended building at the north end of the site. The extent of planting and habitat enhancement proposed is sufficient to meet the requirements of Policy 3 of NPF4. To ensure adequate protection of existing established trees within the site in conjunction with new planting, and to provide full control over finalised design, notwithstanding the submitted planning plan, final landscaping would be controlled by planning condition.

Design Including National Scenic Area and Setting of the Conservation Area

- 8.18. The most significant element of the proposed development is the extension of Block 3 to the north. This has been amended significantly since the previous application decision. Working with the sloping ground levels at the site which falls from west to east, the proposed extension comprises two gables, one which would bookend the development at the north end of the site and another centrally within the extension, linked together and to the original part of the building by flat-roofed elements including roof terraces. The former academy site overall is made up of buildings of different orientations, including frontages and gables when viewed from the east – from the street or the sea. The design proposed maintains that and

reflects the gable that forms the southern edge of the main building group. The central gable is taller, similar in height to the existing building, and the north gable is lower, as described in relation to daylighting above. The overall design approach ensures the parts of the extension which dominate are those utilising traditional form and proportions, linked by lower mainly glazed elements. The form is also simple, with the flat-roofed projection on the principal elevation which detracted from that simplicity in the previous design, now omitted. The building line on the principal elevation is also amended and reduced so that it has a greater sense of abutting the existing building rather than wrapping around or consuming it.

- 8.19. The development would involve some alterations to the existing form of Block 3, including removal of a large two-storey wing on the west elevation, facing Back Road. Again, in amendment from the previous design, the single storey porch on the front, east elevation, would be retained, ensuring protection of its detailing including date stone, and retention of its importance on that elevation.
- 8.20. A mix of materials and finishes are proposed across the different parts of the building. The original Block 3, where retained, would be maintained with the stone walls visible. The flat roofed part of the building would be glass across almost the entirety of the front, east elevation with use of anthracite/grey window frames, and a horizontal matching coloured strip separating the floors. The view towards the glazing would be broken by a series of timber 'fins' placed across the frontage, confirmed as a toned-down weathered timber finish. The fins would be at regular placement, ensuring a simplicity relative to the angled fins of the previous design, and some link to the vertical fins used on the former primary school.
- 8.21. The pitched roof block at the north end of the extension would be clad with corrugated metal, in a traditional profile, in a matching anthracite/grey. The central gable would have a pale terracotta cladding, as would the taller flat-roofed linking extension, most visible from Back Road. This is a similar colour to that used elsewhere within the campus.
- 8.22. The range of buildings has a key role in the setting of Stromness, constructed of traditional materials and sitting on high ground above the harbour at the core of the town, with the earliest part dating to the 1870s. Block 3 is a later addition to the range, of similar dressed stone construction with Welsh slate roof and timber sash and case windows, with ornamented details, that includes extended skew putts and finials, and a '1912' carved date stone in the gable of the entrance porch. A key characteristic of the buildings, like much of Stromness, is the simplicity of form, generally based on rectangular plans with a pitched roof. Relatively large-scale public buildings have been added to the Stromness townscape in recent years and

decades, which follow that approach of form but do so using contemporary materials. Notable examples are the Pier Arts Centre and the Warehouse Buildings including the public library. Prominent traditional buildings can be extended using modern materials therefore, whilst protecting the character of the original, where that is done sensitively.

- 8.23. The key policy tests for this are Policy 14 'Design, quality and place' of NPF4 which provides support for development proposals which are designed to improve the quality of an area, and Policy 2 'Design' of the Local Development Plan which requires that new development must reinforce the distinctive identity of Orkney's built environment and be sympathetic to the character of its local area, and must have a positive effect on the appearance and amenity of the area.
- 8.24. The use of simple pitched roof blocks as the dominant form is an appropriate approach, reflecting the orientation of other parts of the range of buildings, which includes both frontages and gables facing east towards the harbour as noted above. Like the other examples provided in the town, that simplicity of form is aided by use of matching materials on the wall and roof. Additions that were considered to detract from this quality of form and proportions in the previous design iteration have been amended and omitted.
- 8.25. Using traditional pitched roof forms to enclose or 'book end' more contemporary flat roof forms is a common approach, so that the traditional form remains dominant. The extent of the flat roofed part of the building is recessive relative to the more traditional forms and allows retention of the original frontage and allows retention of the ornamented entrance porch. In conjunction with simplicity of form, it is often simplicity of materials and colours that aids the integration of new development with an existing historic built environment, as is proposed.
- 8.26. It is also relevant that the building is located within the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area. Policy 9 'Natural Heritage and Landscape' of the Local Development Plan requires that, "iii. Development that affects the National Scenic Area (NSA) will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that: a. the proposal will not have a significant effect on the overall integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been designated; or b. any such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance".
- 8.27. The design of the development and its impact on Stromness was raised in representations. It is considered that a building of the scale proposed can be accommodated in that setting, in part due to the scale of the Old Academy range of

buildings and acknowledging that it is already made up of buildings of different periods. However, when a building of that scale in such a prominent location is proposed, it must be well designed to ensure it meets the test of reinforcing the distinctive identity of Orkney's built environment and being sympathetic to and having a positive effect on the character of its surroundings. Design comments are raised in the consultation response by Orkney Heritage Society. For the reasons set out above, it is considered that these are adequately addressed, including in the proposed suspensive conditions.

- 8.28. In terms of the National Scenic Area landscape designation, the development does not raise issues of national interest in relation to its landscape, visual or cumulative effects. Accepting the general scale of the extension and therefore degree of change, the development is considered to comply with Policy 2 of the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017, in terms of scale, form, proportions and use of materials. The development would reinforce the distinct identity of Orkney's built environment.

Setting of the Conservation Area

- 8.29. As noted above, the application site is immediately west of the boundary of Stromness Conservation Area. Also, as noted, the range of buildings forming the Old Academy are prominent in the setting of the town centre, and therefore the core of the conservation area. Stromness is relatively unusual in terms of the importance of views into the conservation area, including from the sea, as well as views within and from the area. Policy 7 'Historic assets and places' of NPF4 notes that development will only be supported where the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting is preserved or enhanced. The development would secure a future of most of Block 3 which is the part in closest association with the remainder of the Old Academy, and in longer views, including from the harbour, the modern parts of the building would be seen in context with the former primary school. In terms of the setting of the conservation area specifically, overall it is considered this would be adequately preserved, in accordance with Policy 8 'Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage' of the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017.

Other Works

- 8.30. Other works are included in the proposed development, including installation of air source heat pumps not considered in detail above, external insulation on a relatively modern part of the campus which is already rendered, installation of a

ramp and steps, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. These works are generally non-contentious, and adequate details have been provided.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. The development is acceptable in principle, as the expansion of an existing educational facility within the settlement boundary. In terms of technical matters of noise, access and parking, and surface water drainage, these have been subject to detailed assessment by Environmental Health, Roads Services and Engineering Services, with no objection subject to conditions to secure construction and details. The ridge height of the part of the development with greatest potential to have daylight and sunlight impacts on a neighbouring property has been reduced by approximately 2.2 metres from a previous design, which passed the analysis in relation to daylight and sunlight industry standards. Noise from both construction and operation would be controlled by planning condition. It is considered there would be no unacceptable adverse privacy impact. Sufficient indicative landscaping and biodiversity enhancement measures have been provided, and would be secured by planning condition, including retention of established planting.
- 9.2. The design of the development is considered appropriate for a development of the scale proposed, including general policy support for a deliberately contrasting use of materials and an extension of historic buildings in conjunction with appropriate scale, form, proportions and materials. The development would preserve or enhance the overall setting of the adjacent conservation area and would be visible in a prominent position in the national scenic area.
- 9.3. Ultimately it is a balanced judgement, of impacts of the development on neighbouring properties, balanced against the benefits that would arise including safeguarding a use for the historic Block 3, the enhancement of a key facility within Stromness town centre and which has general policy support, and use of an appropriate design. Notwithstanding identified impacts, the development is considered acceptable with regards the relevant policies of National Planning Framework 4 and the Orkney Local Development Plan 2017. There are no material considerations including those raised in the objections that outweigh this conclusion. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1.

For Further Information please contact:

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jamie.macvie@orkney.gov.uk

Implications of Report

- 1. Financial:** None.
- 2. Legal:** Detailed in section 7 above.
- 3. Corporate Governance:** In accordance with the Scheme of Administration, determination of this application is delegated to the Planning Committee.
- 4. Human Resources:** None.
- 5. Equalities:** Not relevant.
- 6. Island Communities Impact:** Not relevant.
- 7. Links to Council Plan:** Not relevant.
- 8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** Not relevant.
- 9. Environmental and Climate Risk:** None.
- 10. Risk:** If Members are minded to refuse the application, it is imperative that clear reasons for proposing the refusal of planning permission, on the basis of the proposal being contrary to the development plan policy and the officer's recommendation, be given and minuted. This is in order to provide clarity in the case of a subsequent planning appeal or judicial review against the Planning Committee's decision. Failure to give clear planning reasons for the decision could lead to the decision being overturned or quashed. In addition, an award of costs could be made against the Council. This could be on the basis that it is not possible to mount a reasonable defence of the Council's decision.
- 11. Procurement:** None.
- 12. Health and Safety:** None.
- 13. Property and Assets:** None.
- 14. Information Technology:** None.
- 15. Cost of Living:** None.

List of Background Papers

Orkney Local Development Plan 2017, available [here](#).

National Planning Framework 4, available [here](#).

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Planning Conditions.

Appendix 2 – Location Plan.

Appendix 1.

01. The development hereby approved, to which this planning permission relates, must be begun not later than the expiration of three years, beginning with the date on which the permission is granted, which is the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period, this planning permission shall lapse.

Reason: In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, which limits the duration of planning permission.

02. No development, including any site clearance works or alterations to the existing building, shall commence until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority. The Statement shall provide for:

- The means of access to and from the site for plant, machinery and all construction traffic.
- Parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors.
- Anticipated traffic volumes.
- Loading and unloading of plant and materials.
- Construction compound.
- Welfare facilities.
- Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development.
- Stockpiling of materials.
- The erection and maintenance of security hoarding.
- Construction lighting.
- Measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction.
- A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.
- The phasing of the development, including confirmation that no development shall commence in relation to the extension or alteration of Block 3 until the additional car parking to the south of the site is fully constructed and operational.

For the avoidance of doubt there shall be no burning or burying of waste within the site.

Thereafter, and throughout all construction phases, the site and development shall be undertaken wholly in accordance with the approved Construction Method Statement.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties and occupants.

03. Notwithstanding the details included within the site plan hereby approved, no development shall commence until a Scheme of Landscaping for all hard and soft landscaping is submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority. The Scheme of Landscaping shall include:

- The location of all proposed tree, shrub, hedging and grass planting.
- A planting schedule comprising layout, number, density, species, height of all trees and shrubs and seed mix of all grass areas.

- Retention of existing trees and shrubs, unless expressly approved to be removed through discharge of this condition.
- The location, design and materials of all hard landscaping works, including walls, fences and gates.
- A timescale for implementation and completion of all soft and hard landscaping contained in the Scheme of Landscaping, including all tree and shrub planting in the first planting season following commencement of development. All hard landscaping shall be completed wholly in accordance with approved details prior to first occupation of any part of the development, in conjunction with the requirements of condition 05.

All soft and hard landscaping shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the approved Scheme of Landscaping, unless otherwise agreed, in writing, with the Planning Authority.

Any tree or shrub planting which, within a period of five years from planting, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, is dead, dying, diseased or severely damaged, shall be replaced by a tree or shrub of similar size and species to that originally planted, unless otherwise agreed, in writing, with the Planning Authority.

Thereafter, the development shall be maintained in accordance with the details included in the Scheme of Landscaping throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the area and residential amenity and existing established planting.

04. Notwithstanding external finishes included in the drawings hereby approved, no development shall commence until full details of all external detailing (including construction drawings where applicable), finishes, materials and colours (with RAL colour specified where applicable) of the development hereby approved has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority. Thereafter, the exterior of the development shall be finished wholly in accordance with approved details.

These details include, but are not limited to:

- Timber windows and doors in the original openings.
- Window frames.
- Cladding detail between floors at glazing.
- Doors and thresholds.
- Fins.
- Render.
- Balustrades.
- Sinusoidal cladding.
- Rainwater goods.
- Any exterior lighting.
- Retaining walls.
- Steps.
- Heat pump covers/screening.
- Handrails.

- Making good boundary wall at openings.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the area.

05. Notwithstanding the details included within the plans hereby approved, no development shall commence until full car park details have been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority. The car park details shall include:

- Construction details for all new car park works included in the red line boundary of the Proposed Car Parking Plan, including every proposed 'Shared surface'.
- Surfacing details for the areas annotated 'Contrasting Tarmac' in the Proposed Car Parking Plan, including areas: 'crossing with contrasting surface', 'Pedestrian zone' and the area delineated at the top of 'Existing steps' below the Charles Clouston Building.
- Surfacing details within Franklin Road, indicated as 'Proposed Paved Courtyard + Shared Surface' in the Proposed Site / Block Plan drawing 003 Rev 6 (noting this may not be acceptable in the adopted public road).
- Full details of all sections of 'dwarf wall', including jutting into the car park area in front of Block 3 (noting concerns that such sections of wall could be problematic for vehicles using the car park, and acceptable details may include amendment or omission of the detail).
- Full details of boundaries between the hard and soft landscaping within the car park area.
- Notwithstanding submitted details, full details of the lighting proposal (noting acceptable details may include amendment of the submitted details).

Reason: To protect the safety of users of the car park, and to ensure the provision of parking bays, and manoeuvrability within the car park are executed to an appropriate standard.

06. No development shall commence until a condition/dilapidation survey of a defined section of the public road has been carried out by the developer, in conjunction with Roads Services, including any section of the public road used for access/egress to the site by construction traffic. Full details of the survey shall be submitted to and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority, in conjunction with Roads Services, including the full length of road to be surveyed.

Thereafter, the survey shall be carried out wholly in accordance with approved details and shall be completed again following completion of the development.

This condition/dilapidation survey, and any repairs required to the public road to make good damage which is attributed to this development, including by any vehicles or plant accessing or egressing the sites, shall be funded by the developer. All repairs or other works required to be carried out shall be completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in conjunction with Roads Services, within three months of completion of the development.

The developer shall also be responsible for maintaining any damage caused to the public road in such a manner that the roads always remain safe for other road users and until permanent repair works are agreed and carried out.

Reason: In the interest of road safety.

07. No alterations shall be carried out to the existing Block 3 and no ground works shall commence until a Method Statement for the dismantling/removal and subsequent storage of historic features and material has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority. This Method Statement shall include the down taking of the entrance porch and west projection, and shall also include, but not be limited to, retention, salvage and storage of:

- Dressed stone from the down takings of Block 3.
- Stone from demolished sections of stone dykes including pillars.
- Skew putts, skew stones, and finials.
- Flagstones, including those forming paths at the north and south ends of the building.

Where relevant, the Method Statement should also include the re-use of the materials in the final development. All removals, storage (and where relevant, re-use) of materials shall be in accordance with the approved Method Statement.

Reason: To ensure the retention of an important architectural detail of the existing building.

08. Total noise from the air source heat pumps hereby approved shall not exceed NR25 within any residential property outwith the development, where NR25 is the Noise Rating Curve at 25 (noise measurements to be made with a window of any residential property out with the development open no more than 50 millimetres).

Reason: To protect any nearby residents from excessive noise disturbance from the air source heat pumps.

09. Prior to occupation or use of any part of the development hereby approved, all surface water drainage works hereby approved, shall be constructed wholly in accordance with the approved drawings and submitted documents, including the 'Drainage Statement' revision dated 05/05/25. Thereafter, and throughout the lifetime of the development, the drainage shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details, and in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and be compliant with the guidance set out in the CIRIA SuDS Manual C753.

Reason: To ensure the provision of an adequate surface water drainage system and to accord with Policy 13B - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) of Orkney Local Development Plan 2017.

10. All windows in the north elevation of the development hereby approved shall be opaque glazed and fixed (non-opening) throughout the lifetime of the development. No windows shall be installed until full details of the opacity have been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority. Thereafter, only approved glazing shall be installed. Thereafter, the glazing shall be retained in accordance with approved details throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the neighbouring property to the north, from risk of overlooking from approved windows.

11. Hours of work during the construction of the development hereby approved, involving the use of machinery and powered tools, or any other operation, for example hammering, that would generate noise audible beyond the boundary of the site, shall be restricted to 07:30 to 18:00 Mondays to Fridays, 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or the Christmas or New Year Public Holidays unless otherwise agreed, in writing, with the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of the residential amenity of the area and in order to reduce any possible nuisance arising to nearby residents during the construction of this development.



- Site Area Boundary Line
12 690m²
- Ownership Boundary Line
- New External Insulation
- Proposed Paved Courtyard + Shared Surface

11a
12a

1 Site / Block Plan
Scale: 1:500



6	Pavement at entrance re-instated.	12/02/26
5	Updated for new proposals	22/10/25
4	Parking & Roofplan updated	29/11/24
3	Ramp Added	20/02/2024
2	Block 3 updated	08-Dec-23
1	Issued to client review	08-Nov-23
No.	Revision	Date

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Project Stage		Planning	
Project Title / Address			
Phase 2, Building 3			
ORIC			
Stromness			
Drawing Title			
Proposed Site / Block Plan			
Project Lead By	AB	Project No	T-7294
Drawn By	SKG	Scale @ A1	1:500
Checked By	GF	Drawing No.	003
Date	20-Sep-23	Rev No.	06