REPORT NO 1293/04

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

14 OCTOBER 2004

STONE MASONRY BUILDING AT UPPER VICTORIA JUNCTION ON THE A92

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ROADS

ABSTRACT
This report updates the Committee on developments with regard to the old stone masonry building at Upper Victoria Junction on the A92 following the meeting of the Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project on 22 June 2004. Notwithstanding a recent expression of interest in purchasing the building and restoring it to its original condition received from the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society, the Director recommends that the demolition of the building should proceed without further delay.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree:

(i) to note the receipt of the letter dated 16 September 2004 from the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society (Appendix A).

(ii) to note that the building has been recorded by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland at the request of Historic Scotland.

(iii) to note that Claymore Roads Limited have now confirmed receipt of the Building Survey Report in respect of the old stone masonry building at Upper Victoria Junction on the A92. (Appendix B).

(iv) notwithstanding the wishes of the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society as expressed in their letter of 16 September 2004, that Claymore Roads Limited be instructed to proceed with the demolition of the building in accordance with the decision of the Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project of 22 June 2004.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project agreed to investigate and record the detail of the old stone masonry building at the Upper Victoria Junction on the A92 and then allow its demolition while facilitating the archaeological investigation of the associated sub-structure (Reports Nos 817/04 and 826/04 refer).
2.2 Following the Special Committee meeting Claymore Roads Limited (the company for the A92 project) were informed of the Special Committee’s decision and instructed their new works contractor, Morgan Est Civil Engineering Ltd to carry out the necessary building survey before proceeding with demolition.

2.3 Morgan Est Civil Engineering Ltd in turn commissioned their sub-contractor, CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA), to carry out the building survey.

2.4 The necessary survey work was carried out on site, but while CFA’s survey report was still in preparation, a letter dated 16 September 2004 (see Appendix A) was received from Carnoustie and District Heritage Society expressing their wish to purchase the building and restore it to its original condition.

2.5 Claymore Roads Limited have recently confirmed, in a letter dated 7 October 2004 (see Appendix B), that they have now received the Building Survey from CFA.

2.6 Further Historic Scotland have asked the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland to record the salient physical details of the building for the national archive. It is understood that this record has now been prepared.

3 DETAILS

3.1 The Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project at its meetings on 15 June 2004 and 22 June 2004 considered Report No 817/04 and Report No 826/04 respectively regarding the feasibility and practicalities of preserving, either in situ or at a new location, an old stone masonry building which had been unearthed at the site of the former Pitskelly Quarry at Upper Victoria on the A92. A topographical survey had confirmed that the building was on the line of the new link road to be constructed under the A92 Upgrading Project to connect the A92 via a grade separated junction to Carnoustie. However in order to minimise the delay to the A92 project, the new works contractor Morgan Est Civil Engineering Ltd re-designed the horizontal alignment of the new link road to swing the carriageway of the new road clear of the old building. The construction of the reinforced concrete underpass required to carry the new A92 dual carriageway over the new link road was then able to proceed without further delaying the overall construction programme. Although this adjustment to the horizontal alignment swung the carriageway of the link road clear of the building, it was left benched (about half-way down) into the side slope of the cutting formed to accommodate the link road (which will pass under the new dual carriageway at this locus).

3.2 The original purpose of the building is uncertain with expert opinion divided. The most plausible theories are that it was built as either a doo’cot, a workmen’s bothy, a gunpowder store, or a blacksmith’s workshop for the manufacture, repair and sharpening of the tools required for quarrying stone. It is of course quite possible that the building has been used for several distinct and discrete purposes throughout its working life.
3.3 The Special Committee was informed of and took into account such factors as:-

- the historical significance and importance of the building
- the possible cultural value of the building
- the aesthetic and architectural merits of the building
- the feasibility of moving the building (either intact or through dismantling and re-assembly) to a new location
- the feasibility of re-burying the building for “rediscovery” by future generations
- the loss of the original historical context of the building in its new setting (either within the side slope of the road cutting if left in situ, or in a new location some distance away from the old quarry if it were to be moved).
- the contamination of the building with toxic and carcinogenic substances as a result of its long-term burial in landfill material.
- the consequential need to isolate the building from human contact for the remainder of its life.
- the need to enclose the building to protect it from the elements.
- the costs of preserving the building in the short term and maintaining it in the long term.
- the additional costs under the A92 contract of providing retaining walls, additional land, access arrangements and landscaping if the building were to be retained in situ.

3.4 After careful consideration, and taking into account all the relevant factors, the Special Committee agreed that the building should be demolished following careful recording of its dimensions, design, construction and appearance, and that following its demolition, a further archaeological investigation be carried out of its substructure/foundations (facilitated through the demolition of that part of the building above ground).

3.5 The survey required to record the dimensions, etc of the building has been carried out by CFA and their report has been received by Claymore Roads Limited. The Special Committee’s requirements have therefore been met, and demolition could therefore proceed.

3.6 However, before the report confirming that the survey had been completed had been received, a letter (Appendix A) was received from the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society expressing their wish to purchase the building from the council and restore it to its original condition.

3.7 The Director of Roads has considered this expression of interest from the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society, which at face value might appear to offer an opportunity to the Council to transfer the responsibility, risks, liabilities and financial implications associated with the maintenance and long term preservation of the building to another organisation.

3.8 On closer examination however there are practical, health and safety and legal difficulties concerning the proposal from the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society.
3.9 The desire to restore the building to its original condition would be difficult for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the original condition of the building is not known as there are no contemporary records. On a more practical level, the advice which the council has received from Mr John Addison (Peter Stephen and Partners), the conservation engineer commissioned by the council to ascertain the physical condition of the building and its propensity to retention, was that the work required to remove and replace the contaminated mortar jointing material would seriously reduce the historical value of the building. While it might in theory be possible to decontaminate the masonry joints, there was no practical means to decontaminate the masonry without causing further damage to the fabric of the building. Additionally the fabric of the building itself, now that it is re-exposed to the atmosphere, would be vulnerable to deterioration from the elements and would require protection to preserve it into the medium and longer terms. These issues together would seriously jeopardise the “accessibility” of the building for public scrutiny into the future.

3.10 Leaving aside these practical difficulties, there are also legal difficulties. If the building is to remain in situ it is not possible to sell it without selling the land on which it stands. The land on which it stands forms an integral part of the side slope of the cutting of the Upper Victoria link road. The Council would require to retain control of this side slope to ensure its long-term stability, adequate drainage, and visual appearance. The only way to retain full control of the land is to retain ownership. It follows therefore that the Council cannot sell the land on which the building stands and therefore cannot sell the building if it is to remain in situ.

3.11 The feasibility of relocating the building to another location has already been considered and ruled out by the Special Committee. On the advice of Mr Ian Sheppard (who is Principal Archaeology Officer employed by Aberdeenshire Council but whose services are also retained by Angus Council for its own benefit) and Mr John Addison (see paragraph 3.9 above), disassembling and reassembling the building elsewhere would be likely to destroy the character of the construction. Nor would it be feasible to reconstruct it without significant loss of original material and the requirement to incorporate much new material, with an inevitable diminution of its historical value. This view is shared by the council’s Conservation Officer.

3.12 There would also be a duty of care on the Council to ensure that any person removing the building from its land and relocating it elsewhere was aware of the risks of exposure to toxic and carcinogenic contamination and had made adequate provision to protect the public from these risks.

3.13 Therefore, notwithstanding the interest expressed by the Carnoustie and District Heritage Society in purchasing the building from the Council, the Director of Roads is, on balance, of the view that Claymore Roads Limited should be instructed to proceed with the demolition of the building in accordance with the decision of the Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project of 22 June 2004

3.14 It would however be intended that the salient records of the building be lodged in the Carnoustie library for future local reference.
4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The financial implications of retaining or demolishing the building were detailed in Reports 817/04 and 816/04.

4.2 In summary, the capital costs of retaining the building in situ, protecting it from further damage and isolating it from the public in the interests of health and safety would be in the order of £70,000 to £150,000.

4.3 The on-going annual maintenance costs would be in the order of £3,000 to £8,000 depending on the level of capital development progressed at the site.

4.4 The costs to the Council associated with demolishing the building and disposing of the material in a safe manner would be relatively nominal and could be subsumed within the A92 Project Capital Budget provision for 2004/05.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no human rights implications arising from the proposals in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Chief Executive, The Director of Law and Administration, The Director of Finance, the Director of Planning and Transport, the Director of Property Services and the Director of Leisure Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Notwithstanding the interest expressed by the Carnoustie and District heritage Society in purchasing the old stone masonry building at Upper Victoria Junction on the A92, it is proposed that Claymore Roads Limited be instructed to proceed its demolition in accordance with the decision of the Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project of 22 June 2004.

R W McNeil
DIRECTOR OF ROADS

NOTE:

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this Report:-

Report No 817/04 – Special Committee – Company Change Notices A92 Project – 15 June 2004

RWM/PP
11 October 2004
REPORTS/st.masonry.build
16th September 2004

Mr. A. B. Watson,
The Chief Executive,
Angus Council,
The Cross,
FORFAR,
Angus,
DD8 1BX.

Dear Mr. Watson,

**STONE MASONRY BUILDING AT UPPER VICTORIA UNERTHEATED**
**DURING THE UPGRAADING OF THE A92**

The Carnoustie and District Heritage Society are of the opinion that Angus Council should reconsider its decision to recommend the demolition of the above building and that the Special Committee – A92 project should be reconvened to give all its members time to visit the site and then look constructively at the proposals of the society for its retention.

The building was constructed around 1820 with the sole intention of it being used as a blacksmith’s workshop for the manufacture, repair and sharpening of all the tools required for quarrying stone which was subsequently used in the construction of the Taymouth Works in Carnoustie and the majority of the houses in the west end of the town. A horse drawn railway was constructed to convey the stones from the quarry to the lower end of Victoria Street to assist in the transportation of the finished stone.

The blacksmith shop at Upper Victoria is the last remaining piece of evidence left of the start of industrialisation of Carnoustie.

The Carnoustie and District Heritage Society wish to purchase the building, which, incidentally, Historic Scotland consider a building worth preserving, and restore it to its original condition.

The Special Committee – A92 Project, in their submission to demolish the building stated that the road would have to be realigned and the costs involved in this and restoring the building and maintaining it would be excessive that they could not justify this extra expense to public purse. The Society’s proposals to purchase the building, which it would have to do in order to obtain the necessary grants from Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund, would involve no extra cost to Angus Council.
Claymore Roads Ltd., and Morgan Est., have already realigned the link road from the A92 to Carnoustie and both companies seem quite happy to retain the building. Demolishing the building would involve extra cost to Angus Council and the Society’s proposals would alleviate all these problems as it is prepared to take full responsibility.

Finally, if the Society’s proposals are acceptable, it is its intention to make the site an attractive, interesting and viable gateway to Carnoustie.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Brand
Chairman

C.C. Minister for Culture & Arts, Scottish Executive
Mr Mike Weir, M.P.
Mr Andrew Welsh, M.S.P.
Mr Alex Johnstone, M.S.P.
Mr Graham Munro, Historic Scotland
APPENDIX B

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE
14 OCTOBER 2004

STONE MASONRY BUILDING AT UPPER VICTORIA JUNCTION ON THE A92

Letter from Claymore Roads Limited dated 7 October 2004

CLAYMORE ROADS

Claymore Roads Limited
A92 Project Office
Travebank, Barry
Carnoustie, DD7 7SF
Tel: 01241 802100
Fax: 01241 857267

Angus Council
Roads Department
County Buildings
Market Street
Forfar
DD8 3WR

FAO Mr R. McNeill – Director of Roads
7th October 2004

Dear Sirs

A92 Upgrading – Dundee to Arbroath

Further to your correspondence dated 25th June and 13th July 2004 regarding the aforementioned structure, we have now received a copy of the Building Survey Report from CFA Archeology Ltd and enclose same for your information and attention.

Can you please confirm if the Angus Council’s previous instruction to demolish the structure should now proceed?

Yours faithfully
For and on behalf of Claymore Roads Ltd

Gary Perkin
Contracts Manager

cc: JR (Angus Council), Dave Hill (Morgan Est),file

Ends.