Kelso High School
Design Concept

Scottish Borders Council

Concept Design Report, Former Kelso High School, Scottish Borders

September 2017
Mosaic Architecture & Design have been commissioned by Scottish Borders Council to produce a feasibility study to assess the redevelopment opportunities of the former Kelso High School, Scottish Borders.

The former Kelso High School site has been identified as a Redevelopment Opportunity in the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan. The former school is a listed building and this report explores the possibility of retaining the majority of the building by allowing development on the remainder of the site.

The indicative masterplan illustrates that a well designed new neighbourhood can be created within the site and act as a positive addition to the town.

Report Status

This Design Concept Report has been produced for the benefit of any interested purchasers/developers of the site in order to give indicative options for developing the site and identifying material issues to be addressed. It should be noted that the brief is not exhaustive but is considered a useful starting point to be taken cognisance of. It is recommended that any interested party contacts the Council at an early stage to discuss any potential proposals in order to obtain more detailed information and advice.
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Introduction
Primary Considerations

- Impact on the existing B Listed School Building and its conversion to an alternative use
- Impact on existing trees and vegetation on the site
- Impact of existing stone walls at the main entrance
- Creation of a sensitive development which balances the conversion of the B listed building and potential new buildings on the site
- Reinforcement of the building edge along the existing main road access
- Creation of movement through the site with the hierarchy of streets and linked open spaces
- Encouragement of permeability through the site for pedestrians via the existing access points, with new routes treated as pedestrian priority

Figure 01
Main Entrance

Figure 02
Aerial Site Plan

Figure 03
Aerial Location Plan
Site Details

2.0
2.1 Site Details

Site Location
The site is allocated within the Local Development Plan as a Redevelopment Opportunity. It is approximately 2.4 Hectares, positioned on the Southwest-North East axis with the Kelso Conservation Area adjacent. There is two storey housing to the North and West of the site, Kelso Rugby Club to the East and two storey semi detached dwellings on Poynder Place to the South.

Ownership
The site is owned entirely by Scottish Borders Council.

Access
There are currently two vehicular access points; the main entrance from Bowmont Street and a secondary access to the car park at Orchard Park. The entrance from Inchmead Crescent is currently pedestrian, and there are further pedestrian links from within the site to the neighbouring Rugby Club.

Key:
- Site Boundary
- Kelso Conservation Area
- Vehicular Access
- Pedestrian Access
Site Details

Site Context

2.2

Secondary Vehicular Access
B Listed School Building
School Building- Canteen
Open Space Amenity
Sports Pitch
School Building- Teaching
Primary Vehicular Access
Sports Hall
Kelso Rugby Club

04 Existing Site Plan
Kelso School Building

The current institution of Kelso High School was established in 1878, and control passed to the Education Authority in 1919. By 1933 the school suffered from serious overcrowding and architects Reid & Forbes were appointed to design a purpose built secondary school, which was opened in 1939.

The school had a second phase of development in the 1960’s, adding extra classroom space and an assembly hall, and throughout the years further extensions have been made to the original building to facilitate its continuing function as a school:

*It is a testament to the staff of the school that the 1939 buildings remain in such good condition, despite the everyday demands placed upon it by the workings of a modern, medium-sized, secondary school. Nevertheless, it is also testament to the sheer quality of the original buildings. That much of the maintenance burden comes from later extensions speaks volumes. (Simpson & Brown)*
Site Details
Existing Kelso High School

2.3

07 Existing First Floor Plan

08 Main Entrance, RCHAMS E31960
09 Entrance Detail, RCHAMS E31971
10 2003 View of Main Block, RCHAMS E31962
Site Analysis
3.1 Site Analysis

Constraints

The principal buildings of interest are to be retained. It should be noted that the demolition or removal of any buildings on the site will require to meet the tests set out in Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement.

- New development must preserve, protect and enhance the character, integrity and setting of the listed building, and the adjacent Conversation Area.
- Dominance of the central and eastern tower elements to be retained in the townscape.
- Maintain and enhance views into the site.
- Historic gate piers and boundary wall to be retained.
- Retention of a formal landscape treatment for the front of the listed building.
- Retention of mature trees and beech hedge in agreement with the Council.
- Two vehicular access routes into the site to be retained and potential access through to Inchmead Crescent to be explored.
- Pedestrian and cycle access through to Inchmead Crescent to be maintained.
- Residential amenity of neighbouring properties to be taken into account.
Tree Survey

A tree survey has been carried out by Scottish Borders Council and is illustrated opposite.

Agreement with the ‘desirability for retention’ of existing trees would have to be made with the Council’s Landscape Architect prior to any planning permission being submitted.
Concept

- Development should have a clear sense of place and take account of Planning Policy & Guidance including Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland and Place making & Design (Supplementary Planning Guidance) by Scottish Borders Council

- The enhancement of the existing listed building should be a priority when considering any redevelopment on the site

- Conscious decision to remove additional buildings and only retain the original fabric of the building

- Provision of good quality materials which compliment the listed Building

- Creation of a hierarchy of streets and open spaces, served by car parking with semi open play spaces

- High quality landscaping to be integrated within design, trees and planting to enhance key routes/places within the site

- Protecting the view of the school should be a key ambition, and will immediately give the site a strong identity

- Vehicle access should be from Bowmont Street with further vehicle access from Inchmead Crescent which will provide good street connectivity in line with Designing Streets. Further street access is achievable from Orchard Park

- Boundary conditions to be respected and ensure that all windows are a minimum of 18m apart
Design Principles

4.0
Current Planning Policy & Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)
Scottish Planning Policy encourages the provision of a range of well-designed, energy efficient, good quality housing, contributing to the creation of successful and sustainable places.

Local Development Plan (LDP)
The Local Development Plan includes various land allocations in Kelso including housing sites, redevelopment opportunities within the town. It should be noted that other policies will also apply.

A number of policies included in the Local Development Plan will be applicable to this site including but not limited to: Policy EP7 Listed Buildings, Policy PMD1 Sustainability, Policy PMD2 Quality Standards, Policy PMD3 Land Use Allocation, Policy HD1 Affordable and Special Needs Housing, Policy HD3 Protection of Residential Amenity and IS2 Developer Contributions.

Designing Streets
Designing Streets changes the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a focus on the dominance of motor vehicles.
The policy states that street design must consider place before movement and puts an emphasis on the creation of successful places through the creation of good street design.

Place making & Design SPG
The aim of the SPG is to ensure that the Scottish Borders will be a quality place in which to live, providing attractive sustainable towns and villages that are distinctive and diverse. The SPG provides guidance in relation to the successful place making and design principles and the impact this can have on the social and economic wellbeing of communities and the environment at large.

Additional Guidance
Additional documents and policies will apply in addition to those listed as examples below.
Conservation Status/ Significance

The Kelso High School building is Category B listed, which indicates that it is "recognised as being of regional, or more than local importance, or a major example of some particular period, style or building type."

It was identified by Simpson & Brown's Conservation Statement as a building of great architectural interest and granted an overall level of "Considerable" significance.

Their justification for this is twofold; firstly, Reid & Forbes specialised in new school buildings during that period and Kelso High School was the culmination of their experience and design aesthetic. Secondly, the school is an example of the International Style with Art Deco motif elements - showing a worldwide influence, but a decidedly Scottish response. Simpson & Brown argue that the mix of international and local influence on the detailing of the project "gives a greater sense of place to the architecture of Kelso High School" than is found in its contemporaries.

Simpson and Brown note that the historical and social value of the institution of Kelso High School is also significant, and the School building is a physical symbol of this legacy.
Conservation

Significance Grading

Considerable - Retain & Respect

A building or element of regional (Scottish Borders) or national (Scotland/United Kingdom) importance, or a good example of a particular period, style or type with a high degree of intact original fabric that contributes substantially to the importance of the building or site overall.

This definition, and the intent to retain, applies to the following site elements:

- The principal 1939 building fabric, including the Tower features
- Entrances and three main stairwells
- School gate piers
- Restricted views from the entrance
4.2 Conservation - Significance Grading

Significance Grading

Moderate - Retain wherever possible

A building or element of local (Kelso) importance, or an element that contributes to, but is not a key element to the importance of the building or site overall.

- Ground floor spinal corridors
- Offices of the Rector & Depute Rector
- Gymnasium, changing rooms & original shower room
- SW Cloakroom
- PE Staff Base (Former Cloakroom)
- Glazed semi-circular off-shoot from physics laboratory
- Original art studios

Neutral - Opportunity for alteration

An element which neither contributes, nor detracts from the importance of the building or site overall.

- Classrooms

Negative - Opportunity for alteration

A building or element which detracts from the overall significance of the building or site overall.

- Shower room extension adjacent to the gymnasium
- Infill wall to PE Staff Base
- Store cupboard extensions on the first floor of the East Block
Design Principles
Conservation - Significance Grading

8.2 Although the school buildings are generally in good condition, investment in their conversion and maintenance to prevent deterioration of the historic fabric is required. In considering the process in the conversion of the Kelso High School buildings, viable economic uses need to be found so as to safeguard the future of the listed building as well as to provide financial assistance to contribute to any ongoing maintenance and repair.

8.3 In considering possible new uses and developments, the Council wish to ensure that any new uses and development will enhance the Kelso High School site as well as promote its heritage value not only in Kelso but also for the Scottish Borders.
4.3 Retained School Building

Retained B Listed Building

The findings of the Significance Grading have been accepted and building elements judged to be of Considerable Significance have proposed to remove all buildings which are not of this band

- The principal SE Elevation
- NW Elevation of the gymnasium
- Tower main block and East block
- Entrances and three main stairwells
- Gate piers

In addition several moderate significant grading elements have also been retained and converted which include the following:

- Ground floor spinal corridors (Part)
- Offices of the Rector & Depute Rector
- Gymnasium
- PE Staff Base (Former Cloakroom)
- Glazed semi-circular off-shoot from physics laboratory
- Original art studios

Neutral or negative grading elements have not been included in the proposals for the site as they do not contribute positively to the overall conversion of the building.
The following two projects are two examples of similar building typologies which have been converted into modern residential developments:

Former Leith Academy, Edinburgh

The former building was built as a new secondary school for the increasingly overcrowded Leith Academy, one of the oldest schools in Scotland. The building was designed by G Reid & J Smith Forbes, and built between 1930-31. It is of hollow pentagon-plan with a hall cutting across the central courtyard. The building is Category B Listed, meaning that it is considered to be of regional or more than local importance. The Neo-Georgian style ensured the building was attractive to developers for conversion to residential loft apartments.

Luma Lamp Factory, Govan

The Category B listed building is a significant example of Art Deco in Glasgow, and known as a local landmark. The building was in a state of dereliction for some time as conversion to residential was possible, but posed some significant conservation challenges.

“The development appraisal finally reported that the building was capable of conversion to housing. However, to achieve this, partial demolition would be required to allow a viable and cost effective scheme. in other words, the building needed fairly major surgery and the land to the rear would probably be needed for development of new build to make the project feasible.”

Adaption of original building fabric (fenestrations) was required to facilitate change of use - this was accepted as a necessity to achieve the greater purpose of retaining the building.
Design Concept

5.0
Concept Design Report, Former Kelso High School, Scottish Borders

Design Concept

Analysis

5.1

Site Plan Zones

SQUARE
COURTYARD
FRONTAGE
STREET
INFORMAL STREET

Bowmont Street Frontage:
Reinforces line of street, retains listed boundary wall

Courtyard:
Active frontage arrangement along key routes creates natural space to rear for parking

Street:
Opportunity for relationship with opposite block

Square:
Direct relationship to listed building, formal treatment of space

Character Areas

Converted Former School Building:
Most prominent site feature

Bowmont Street Frontage:
Reinforces line of street, retains listed boundary wall

Courtyard:
Active frontage arrangement along key routes creates natural space to rear for parking

Street:
Opportunity for relationship with opposite block

Square:
Direct relationship to listed building, formal treatment of space

Open Space:
Proximity to Boundary requires open area to be created

Informal Street:
Less visible area to the rear of site; space for a staggered arrangement to create a more casual place

Key:
- Protected View
- Potential Character Area
- Designated Amenity Space
- High Quality Tree/40 Year Life Expectancy
- Medium Quality Tree/20 Year Life Expectancy
- Low Quality Tree/20 Year Life Expectancy

23 Site Plan Zones
Conversion Strategy

- Decision to demolish the later extensions which have a negative effect on the original design of 1939 - this will also allow more space for landscaping, amenity and car parking provision.
- Key facades preserved - SW Elevation of main block and elevation of Gymnasium
- Original entrances retained for purpose and restored
- Provision of a mix of flats to meet local market demands
- Duplex option to utilise double height gymnasium space and again underneath art studios to bypass need for additional communal staircase
- Removal of elements which are not original building fabric

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5.3

Context

- Strive to create a distinctive attractive place, easy to move around and responsive to its context.
- Appropriate balance and mix of new buildings designed to compliment the retained B listed school building as per S&B recommendations.
- Create a permeable street layout by extending existing movement with new desire lines.
- Protect views from main access to listed building.
- Protect listed gate piers at main entrance.
- The building position forms a natural square with the proposed housing arrangement.
- All new dwellings to have minimum 100sqm gardens with 9m depth and 18m between opposite properties.

Accessibility

- The main access will be from Bowmont Street and a preferred secondary access from Inchmead Crescent should be investigated.
- Pedestrian links adjacent to vehicular access to create permeability throughout the site.
- Roads hierarchy with primary roads and secondary shared surfaces throughout. A street network in line with the principals of Designing Streets is required - this will create naturally traffic calmed streets by encouraging slow vehicle speeds.
- Parking is required at a rate of 175% when provided on a communal basis, landscape design to screen and soften the visual impact of parked cars. Adequate cycle parking should be also be integrated into the site.

ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

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Masterplan

Shared Surfaces

5.3

Scale Massing & Form
- Listed building is respected by use of appropriate surrounding scale - the signature tower element of the former school is read as the dominant feature on the site.
- New housing can contribute to the overall sense of place with character designed into every house, with balance scale and proportion.
- Corner dwellings designed with active frontages to avoid blank gables.

Safety & Security
- Public Open space with play area overlooked by dwellings for security.

Open Space
- Existing view is enhanced by high quality amenity space and soft landscaping.
- Retention of key mature trees to boundary line.
- New trees planted to replace those which hamper enabling development on the site.
- Hedgerows recommended throughout development to soften boundaries and promote biodiversity.
- SUDS ponds within the development.

Details & Materials
- Dwellings to have variations in detail and materials to compliment listed building.
- Consider using traditional local materials which reflect local character.
- Existing boundary walls on Bowmont Street are listed and consideration should be given to their retention.