

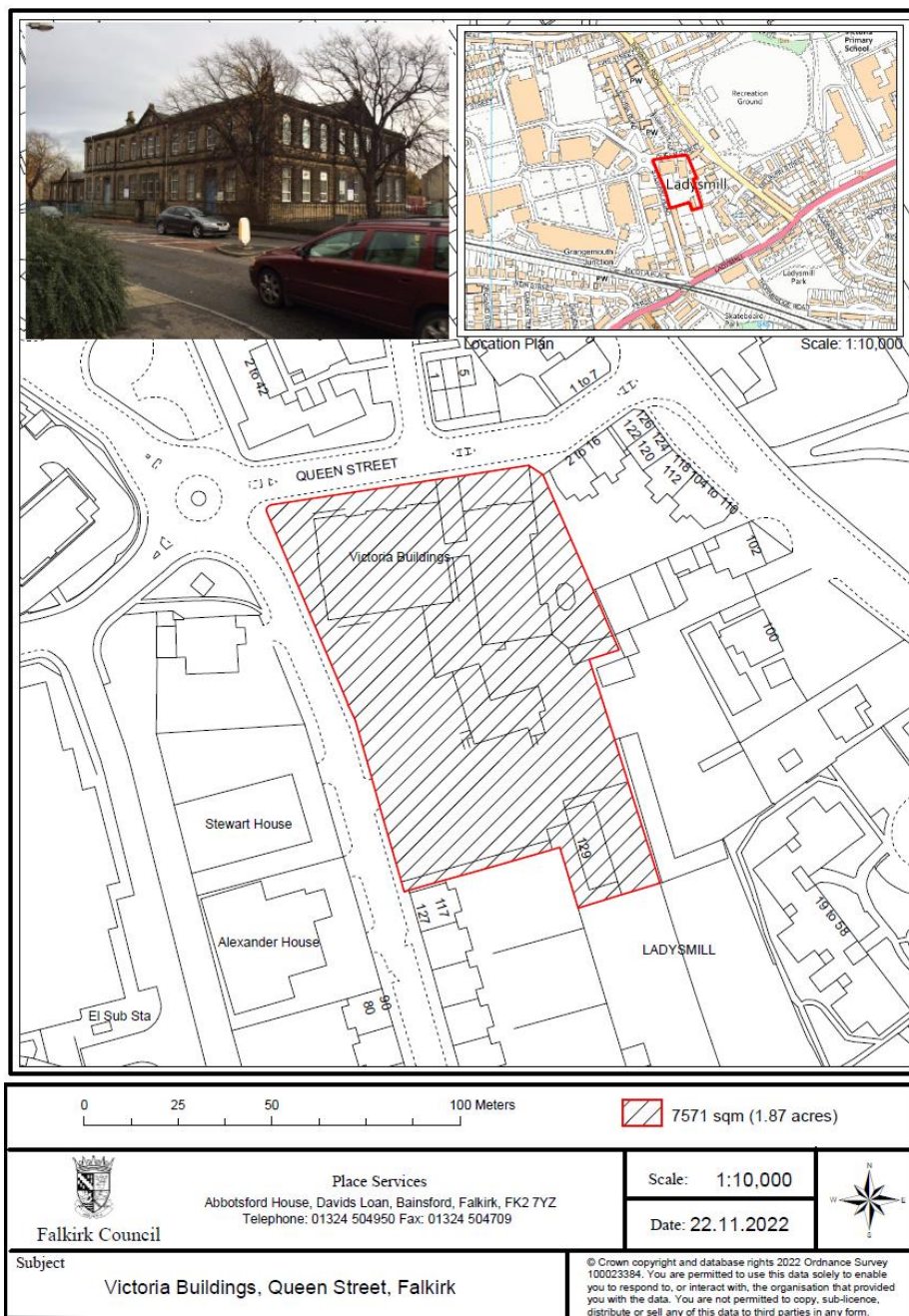
Victoria Buildings Site, Falkirk - Planning Statement

1. Introduction

The purpose of this planning statement is to provide planning advice in support of the marketing of the former Victoria Buildings site in Falkirk. It sets out the planning policy context to the site, guidance on potential uses, design and access considerations, and information on developer contributions which may be sought.

2. Description

The site is 0.75 hectares in size and lies to the east of Falkirk Town Centre in a prominent location on the corner of Queen Street and Stewart Road (see map below).



Victoria Buildings, the largest building on the site, was built in 1901 by A & W Black and is a typical example of the classical style of early 20th century school architecture. It is a 2 storey building with a square plan executed in blond sandstone with a slate roof. Following its closure as a school, the building was used by the Council's library service, but it has been unoccupied since 2013. Although the external walls are in reasonable condition, the roof has been subject to a substantial collapse with substantial water ingress. Immediately to the east of the main school building is a single storey sandstone extension, built as the infant department of the main school, and until very recently in use as Queen Street Nursery. It is in reasonable condition. Neither of the buildings are listed.

The original school buildings are set within a spacious playground which is enclosed by the original boundary wall and gate piers, and largely original railings. Within the playground sits a building used as a base for the Council's outdoor activities service, which is to be relocated from the site, and a redundant portacabin formerly leased as a creche. There are four mature trees located along the Queen Street boundary.

To the north, east and south of the site lies mixed 2 and 3 storey tenemental housing, with commercial use to the west.

3. Planning Policy

The current development plan covering the property comprises [National Planning Framework 4](#), the [Falkirk Local Development Plan 2 \(LDP2\)](#) and associated [Supplementary Guidance \(SG\)](#). The following policies are of relevance:

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

Policy 7 (Historic assets and places). The policy seeks to protect and enhance historic environment assets and places. Although the traditional school buildings on the site are not listed or located in a conservation area, Policy 7(o) states that 'non-designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved wherever feasible'.

Policy 9 (Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings). The policy seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings.

Policy 14 (Design quality and place). The policy seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate well designed development that makes successful places by taking a design-led approach and applying the Place Principle.

Policy 15 (Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods). The policy seeks to promote connected and compact neighbourhoods where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options.

Policy 16 (Quality homes). The policy would be relevant to any proposed re-use of the site for housing, particularly section (f) which relates to proposals on sites which are not specifically allocated for housing in the LDP.

Policy 26 (Business and industry). The policy would be relevant to any proposed re-use of the site for business and industry, in particular sections (d) and (e) which set out criteria for proposals in areas not allocated for business and industry, and general amenity considerations.

Policy 27 (City, town, local and commercial centres). The policy promotes the ‘town centre first’ principle in terms of focusing significant footfall generating developments in centres.

Policy 28 (Retail). The policy requires retail proposals to be consistent with the ‘town centre first’ approach.

Other NPF4 policies may be relevant depending on the nature and scale of any proposals.

Falkirk Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2)

The site is located within the Urban Limit as defined in LDP2. It is not covered by any site specific LDP proposals or policies, and is not located in a town or local centre, or a designated business area. The following general policies may be relevant:

[PE01 Placemaking](#). The policy seeks to promote good design and placemaking through criteria related to the six qualities of successful places.

[PE17 Open Space and New Development](#). The policy sets out requirements related to the provision of open space in new development and is supported by [SG05 Green Infrastructure and New Development](#).

[PE20 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows](#). The policy sets out requirements with regards to the safeguarding of trees.

[PE27 Vacant, Derelict, Unstable and Contaminated Land](#). The policy encourages the reuse of vacant and derelict sites.

[HC02 Windfall Housing](#). The policy provides support for housing on unallocated sites within the Urban Limit subject to a range of criteria.

[HC03 Affordable Housing](#). The policy sets out requirements for the provision of affordable housing within private housing developments and is supported by [SG06 Affordable Housing](#).

[HC04 Housing Density and Site Capacity](#). The policy provides guidance on determining appropriate capacities for housing sites.

[JE04 Business Development outwith Designated Business Areas](#). The policy indicates the criteria to be applied to business proposals located outwith specifically designated business areas.

[JE09 Town Centres First](#). The policy outlines the town centre first approach, with a presumption in favour of locating significant footfall generating development (retail, leisure etc) within defined town and local centres.

[JE10 Food and Drink](#). The policy provides criteria for Class 3 uses, hot food takeaways and public houses, stating that these are encouraged to locate within town, local and commercial centres and must demonstrate no impact on residential properties.

[IR02 Developer Contributions](#). The policy highlights the requirement for developer contributions where deficiencies in infrastructure are created by development. Additional information on the calculation of developer contributions is provided in [SG13 Developer](#)

[Contributions](#). Further advice on likely requirements in respect of the site is provided in section 6.

[IR03 Education and New Housing Development](#). The policy provides specific advice on situations where residential development is proposed with areas where there are school or nursery capacity deficiencies.

[IR09 Parking](#). The policy confirms that the Council will apply the National Roads Development Guide, subject to approved local variations. Requirements for the provision of electric vehicle charging points are further highlighted in [SG14 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy](#).

[IR13 Low and Zero Carbon Development](#). The policy sets out requirements for the incorporation of low and zero carbon-generating technologies within developments. Further guidance is provided in [SG14 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy](#).

Other LDP2 policies may be relevant depending on the nature and scale of any proposals.

4. Potential Uses and Design Considerations

It is recognised that, owing to its present condition, retention and conversion of Victoria Buildings itself is unlikely to present a realistic option. The Queen Street Nursery is in reasonable condition and its conversion and re-use would be encouraged. Original boundary features (walls, gate piers and railings should be retained/refurbished if possible. Likewise, the salvage and reuse of stonework or features from the original buildings would be encouraged to retain as much of the historic character of the site as possible.

Residential development would be the favoured use for the site, given the continued need for new housing in the area in sustainable locations and utilising brownfield sites where possible.

Tenemental style housing providing frontages to Queen Street and Stewart Road, and continuity with adjacent housing would be the preferred design solution.

Reuse of the site for commercial purposes could be considered, but only subject to the relevant development plan policies highlighted in section 3 above. Any proposed business use would have to demonstrate compatibility with adjacent residential uses, preserve residential amenity and provide a satisfactory design solution. The site lies outwith the Falkirk Town Centre boundary, therefore retail and food and drink uses would not generally be favoured, given the desire to focus such activities in the Town Centre.

A tree survey should be carried out for the mature trees on the Queen Street frontage and the desirability and practicality of retaining them considered. They are not covered by a Tree Preservation Order. If removed, provision should be made for replacement planting within the site as part of the landscape scheme.

5. Access and Parking

Access to the site is expected to continue to be from Stewart Road. Parking requirements will be as indicated in the [National Roads Development Guide](#).

6. Developer Contributions

Education Contributions

At the present time, the catchment high school, Graeme HS, is subject to capacity pressures and financial contributions are likely to be required for residential development at the rate set out in [SG13 Developer Contributions](#). Currently this is £2,898.87 per house and £772.52 per flat. 1 bedroom flats are exempted. The catchment primary school, Victoria PS, has some potential capacity issues, but at present contributions are unlikely to be sought. No contributions would be sought towards denominational schools or nursery provision.

Open Space Contributions

Open space contributions are likely to be required in respect of residential development, given that there will very limited scope to provide functional recreational open space on-site. A local open space audit would determine the scope and extent of contributions to off-site provision in accordance with the methodology set out in [SG05 Green Infrastructure and New Development](#).

Affordable Housing

In accordance with Policy HC03 of LDP2, there would be a requirement for residential development of greater than 20 units to provide 15% of the units as affordable housing. [SG06 Affordable Housing](#) provides further details.

7. Procedures

As part of the bidding process, submissions should include sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with the terms of this planning statement.

Following the selection of the preferred bidder and the conclusion of missives, pre-application discussion on the details of proposals would be encouraged.