



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION
FOR FORMER
AYR GRAMMAR, SCHOOL

*We aim to bring a new flagship HQ to Ayr -
a town centre destination*

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Tom Coughtrie'.

Tom Coughtrie. Managing Director



**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT (PDAS)
IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION
FOR CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER
PRIMARY SCHOOL (BUILDINGS AND ASSOCIATED
GROUND), C-LISTED AYR GRAMMAR
SCHOOL (USE CLASS 10) TO PROPOSED
MIXED USE, INCLUDING CLASSES 1A, 3, AND 9,
WITH ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND CAR PARKING**

**STATEMENT PREPARED ON BEHALF OF
CREATIVE DESIGNS (AYR) LTD PER
TOM COUGHTRIE, APEX HOUSE,
1 CARRICK ROAD, AYR, KA7 2RA**

Report Prepared by:

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January 2024

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SUMMARY / CONCLUSIONS

- It is understood that South Ayrshire Council has not recently carried out a 'health check' of circumstances pertaining in Ayr Town Centre which would include a review of vacant properties across the board. Informal sources suggest that vacancy rates among retail units is over 40%. Ayr Town Centre also contains a concentration of listed buildings and again, while no precise figures are available, it is probably safe to state that many are vacant and unused
- With this as a context, it is important to appreciate that the proposals are a manifestation of a level of commitment to Ayr Town Centre on behalf of the Applicant rarely witnessed these days
- The former school would become the Design Centre and Flagship HQ for the three aspects of the business – Retail, Hospitality and Residential.
- The former Ayr Grammar School, located as it is on the A79, sits at one of the main entry/exit points into Ayr Town Centre from the south in the first instance, and to the north in the second. The term 'gateway location' could be considered appropriate
- Ayr Grammar School has made a considerable contribution to the overall quality of the townscape, in particular its imposing front elevation, which, along with the Town Hall, effectively bookends the commercial uses of the High Street. Its repurposing, based on relatively limited changes to its fabric – both externally and internally – will mean that a building that might have faced a very uncertain future will now continue to make a high-quality contribution to the environment in this part of the town
- The proposals brought forward by Creative Designs have been underpinned by the requirements of relevant planning policy, advice and guidance and, where appropriate, material considerations
- Historic Environment Scotland, in its document Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings, one of its key messages is
- *'Alterations to a building, even if they are extensive, will be better than losing the building entirely'*
- The proposed changes in this instance will be substantially unobtrusive
- In relation to any concerns re potential impact on town centre retailing, an important detail is that the proposed retailing floorspace will be occupied by the Applicant to accommodate an expansion to his business. It will not, in fact, be new floorspace competing with vacant floorspace elsewhere in the town centre, and otherwise is a confirmation of the Applicant's loyalty to an Ayr Town Centre option
- *'Bringing what is normally out of town retail into the heart of the town will provide a major new addition to Ayr in the strategic location.'*
- *The school is a much-loved building in the town, with many residents having attended the school in their early years. The plan for a mix of large-item retail with an element of hospitality will allow the public to continue to enjoy the qualities of this important building in contrast to any restricted private use. The central hallway in the former gymnasium will be an open airy public space'*

1.0 INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- **Applicant**

Creative Designs (Ayr) Ltd is located at 1 Carrick Road, Ayr, KA7 2RA – literally across the road to the north re the proposed site. The company was established in 1977 and can claim to be the UK's longest established and experienced kitchen dealers. Located initially in Ayr High Street in 1980 as Pandora and Creative Designs, it relocated initially to New Bridge Street (opposite the Town Hall) and then to Carrick Road in 1984. It has had a showroom at its current address since 1984.

The company also opened Café 51 and Creative Classics in Beresford Terrace in 2010.

The company, which is now an established brand across the UK re catering and kitchen products/services, has clearly signalled its commitment to remaining within Ayr Town Centre while other retailers have either closed or drifted away to other locations.

Indeed, as part of the bid process, ARPL Architects was commissioned to produce a document that confirmed the company's intention to '*...aim to bring a new flagship HQ to Ayr – a town centre destination' ...*', '*A programme to save Ayr Grammar*'.

- **Background/A Commitment to Ayr Town Centre**

When it closed in 2021, Ayr Grammar School had been in existence for 192 years, i.e. since 1829. With a catchment within the inner parts of the Ayr urban area, south of the River Ayr and as far as Belmont, pupils were transferred to Ayr Grammar Primary School & Early Years Centre in Fort Street.

By the time the former Ayr Grammar School was acquired by Creative Designs (Ayr) Ltd in June 2023, it had been vacant for **approximately two years** and, in that relatively short period, it had suffered from repeated low-level vandalism. The history of other vacant listed buildings in Ayr confirmed that this could well escalate, leading to major deterioration.

- **Planning and Listed Building Application Team**

This PDAS was prepared by:

- **Michael S Evans, Planning Consultant, meicplan.associates**
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and

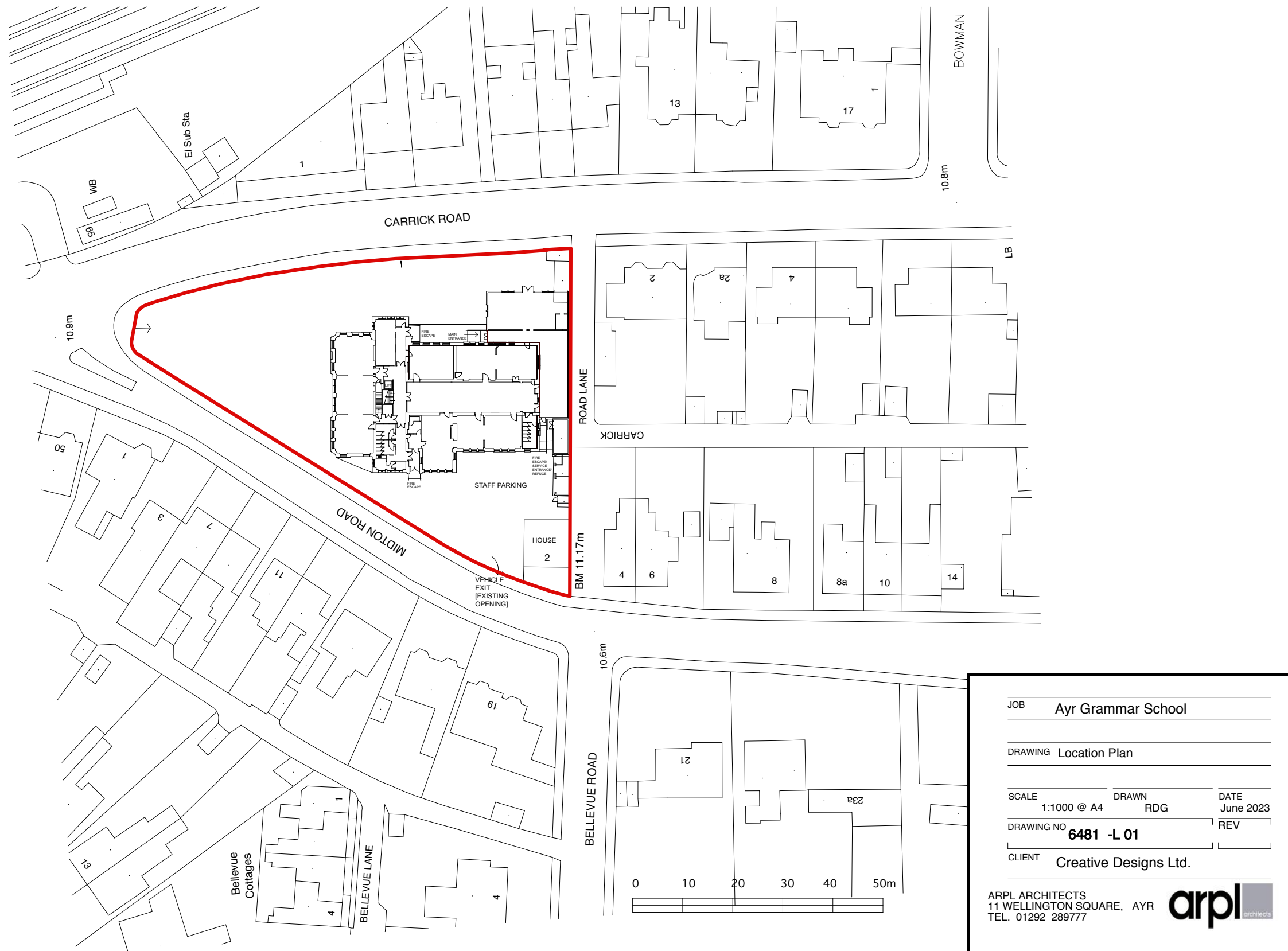
- **Gordon Fleming, ARPL Architects**, 11 Wellington Square, Ayr,
KA7 1EN

- **The Application Site**

This is shown in Planning Application Drawing No 6481-L01, a copy of which can be found on the following page. Broadly triangular in shape, the site extends to 3700 sq.m and currently is made up of the former school buildings, janitors house and tarmac paving hard landscape with enclosing boundary walls and railings

At the time of writing, it is understood that this is wholly owned by the Applicant.

Planning Application Drawing No 6481-L01: Location Plan



- **Application Proposals**

The proposals comprise the conversion of the former Ayr Grammar primary school to provide a mixed use development containing residential, retail, restaurant, and ancillary spaces.

A new entrance is proposed on the principal elevation of the building allowing access into the heart of the former school. The ground floor classrooms are retained as open spaces well suited to the proposed retail use with little subdivision. The entry route leads through to the main stairwell, opened up to its original form by the removal of the unfortunate storage towers. This in turn gives access to the former gymnasium, the focal point of the building where the new restaurant use provides a public celebration of the former spaces.

The upper floor classrooms are given over to residential use with independent access provided via a new stair and lift.

The smaller ancillary building of janitors house and modern classrooms form three new residential units with independent access.

The site itself is proposed to be landscaped to create a welcoming new planted forecourt leading to the entrance.

- **Scope and Purpose of this PDAS**

This Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) has been prepared on behalf of Creative Designs (Ayr) Ltd, 1 Carrick Road, Ayr for an application to South Ayrshire Council for planning permission for proposed Change of Use of the former primary school (buildings and associated ground), C-listed Ayr Grammar School (Use Class 10) to proposed mix use, including Classes 1A, 3 and 9, with associated landscaping and car parking and relates to the area of ground shown in Planning Application Drawing No 6481-L01.

The purpose of this Statement is therefore to confirm that the proposals are compatible with the requirements of the following:

- The implications of the Characteristics of the Site, etc. for the location of the proposals and the design outcome within the broader and immediately surrounding townscape, including photographic evidence, maps and diagrams

- Responses to requirements of relevant Planning Policy, advice and guidance from relevant source documents at national and local levels, including:

Planning

- (i) South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2, SAC, adopted August 2022
- (ii) National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), adopted February 2023
- (iii) Supplementary Guidance: Historic Environment, SAC, adopted November 2014

Other Relevant Material Considerations (Planning)

- (i) The most significant of these being the listing of the area shown in Planning Application Drawing No 6481-L01. A copy of the listing statement can be found in the Appendix. While the whole site is listed, it is described as 'Midton Road, Ayr Grammar Primary School, including Caretaker's Cottage, Gatepiers, Gates, Railings and Boundary Wall'
- (ii) Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, HES, 2019
- (iii) Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings, Historic Environment Scotland, April 2014
- (iv) Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Setting, 2016
- (v) Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Use and Adaptation of Listed Schools
- (vi) Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Use of Micro-renewables

Other Relevant Material Considerations

- (i) South Ayrshire Economic Development Strategy 2013 – 2023, SAC
- (ii) South Ayrshire Strategic Economic Plan – Vision, June 2021

Other Sources

- (i) To include documents prepared by the Clients as part of the building/acquisition process

- Other Relevant Material Considerations, including policies in relation to economic development

- **Regulatory Requirements**

Planning Circular 5 2009, Hierarchy of Developments, Scottish Government Development Department, July 2009 confirms that the proposals are a ‘Local Development’, further confirmed by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, Reg 2(2).

Planning Circular 3/2013 provided guidelines as to when (Regulation 13) an application should include a Design Statement or, when appropriate, a Design and Access Statement (paras 3.18 and 3.19).

Clearly, the proposals do not come within the requirements of paras 3.18 or 3.19.

Notwithstanding the above, para 3.15 of 03/2013 states that *‘All applicants, together with developers, architects, designers and agents, should consider design as an integral part of the development process.’*

Indeed, Planning Advice Note 68: Design Statements confirms that *‘a Design Statement could potentially be submitted with any planning application, the advice being that ‘where a formal Design Statement is not necessary, applicants should still have a clear and logical design philosophy which could be explained, if required.’*

In addition, the ‘Interim Guidance on the Principles of Listed Building Consent’ Published by HES in April 2019, in para 12 states that *‘Planning authorities should satisfy themselves ... that they include an appropriate level of supporting information.’*

Planning Application Details of Contents

The planning application comprises the following set of drawings prepared by Gordon Fleming, ARPL Architects:

Planning Application Drawing Name	Drawing No
Location Plan	6481-L01
Ground plan as existing	6481 E 01
First floor plan as existing	6481 E 02
Roof plan as existing	6481 E 03
Elevations as existing sheet 1	6481 E 04
Elevations as existing sheet 2	6481 E 05
Sections as existing	6481 E 06
Ground plan as proposed	6481 P 01
First floor plan as proposed	6481 P 02
Elevations as proposed sheet 1	6481 P 03
Elevations as proposed sheet 2	6481 P 04
Sections as proposed	6481 P 05
Site plan as proposed	6481 P06
Roof plan as proposed	6481 P 07
Porch Concept drawing	6481 P 10
Porch detail/materials	6481 P 11
Front entrance photomontage	6481 P12
Interior montage	6481 P 13
Window details	6481 P 14

In addition to the above, the application includes:

Document	Prepared by
Planning Application Form	ARPL Architects
Planning, Design and Access Statement	meicplan.associates/ARPL Architects

Contents

This PDAS is divided into six further sections:

- Section 2 - Area Context and Site Analysis
- Section 3 - Planning History
- Section 4 - Assessment
- Section 5 - Proposals
- Section 6 - Access
- Section 7 - Summary/Conclusions

Detailed structure of each section to be found on page 3.

As the proposals are for changes to be made to a listed building, this planning application is accompanied by a Listed Building Application.

Disclaimer

This PDAS has therefore been prepared for the sole and exclusive use of the Clients and has been prepared in response to their particular requirements. This Statement may therefore not be relied upon by another party.

2.0 AREA CONTEXT AND SITE ANALYSIS

Broad Townscape Context

As the Google extracts confirm, the broad hinterland of the former Ayr Grammar School is made up of housing to the north west, west, south west and south, and commercial/transport/retail to the north east. Much of the housing falls within the Ayr 2 and Ayr Central Conservation Areas, as does the site itself.

Immediate Townscape Context (Neighbourhood Character)

Planning Application Drawing No 6481-L01 confirms the urban nature of the immediate townscape context and that the site is bounded by Carrick Road along the east, Midton Road in the west and, in part, by Carrick Road Lane in the south. This is further confirmed by the site images shown. The context in the main is dominated by sandstone housing built in the 19th century.

Development Plan Context

The site is within the settlement of Ayr and within the Ayr 2 Conservation Area as defined by the Council's Environment and Conservation Mapping. The Proposals Map shows it to be within a 'Community Facility' land use designation, bounded by Predominantly Residential Areas to the west and south, and Transport to the east. At its northernmost point, the site is 35 m from the southern boundary of Ayr Town Centre, as defined in LDP2.

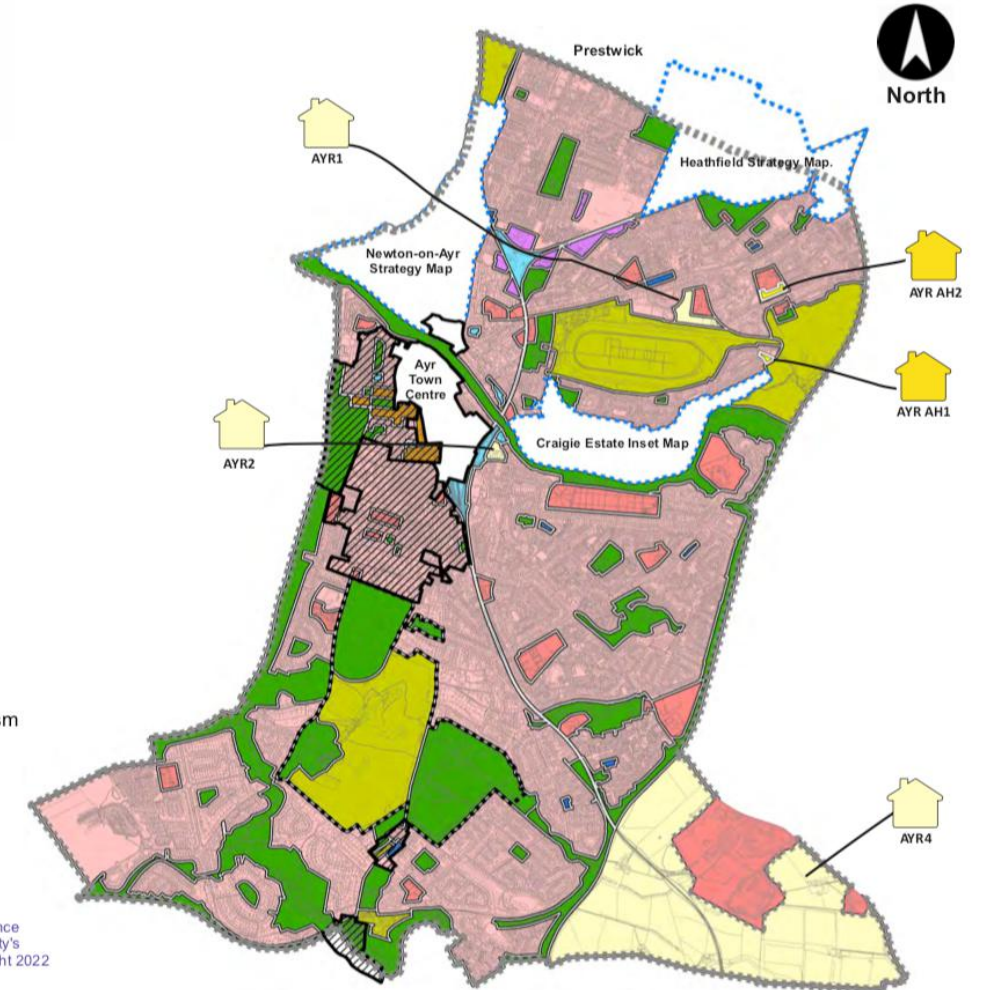
South Ayrshire Council

Local Development Plan

Ayr

Legend

-  Settlement Boundaries
-  Belleisle/Rozelle Policy Area
-  Proposed Housing Release Sites
-  Community Facility
-  Conservation Area
-  General Industry
-  General Retail
-  Office
-  Open Space
-  Predominantly Residential Area
-  Retail Core
-  Retail Periphery
-  Existing Housing Allocation Site
-  Significant leisure/recreation/tourism
-  Transport



Map not to scale

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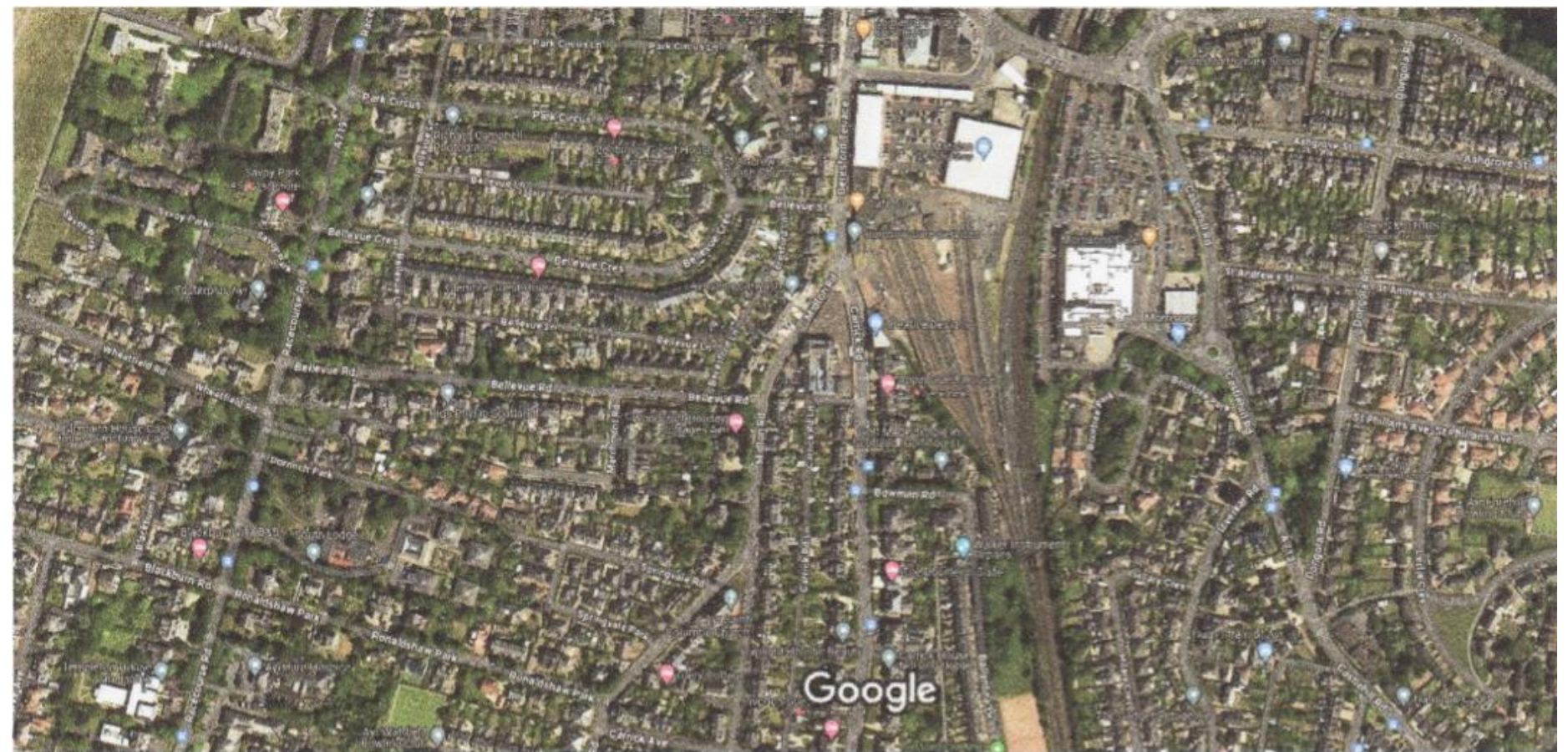
AERIAL IMAGES

Close image



Imagery ©2023 Airbus, Getmapping plc, Maxar Technologies, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2023 10 m

wider town context



Imagery ©2023 Airbus, Getmapping plc, Maxar Technologies, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2023 50 m

Site Analysis

- **Site Description**

Midton Road, Ayr Grammar Primary School, including Caretaker's Cottage, Gatepiers, Gates, Railings and Boundary Wall were listed Category C on 26 November 2002. The listing statement can be found in the Appendix.

- **Existing Land Use**

The site and buildings are no longer in use but the current 'components' are:

- a two storey classroom block to the north
- single storey classroom wings
- a single storey rooflight gymnasium space
- a modern single storey extension containing two classrooms
- single storey ancillary spaces of kitchen, storage and plant rooms
- a single storey janitors house
- tarmac playground area enclosed by stone walls and railings

- **Topography and Land Form**

The site lies at 10.8 m OD and is essentially flat.

- **Physical Relationship to Neighbouring Uses**

The former school sits on a triangular site bounded by public roads on its two main sides and a smaller mews access lane on its southern boundary.

The western edge to Midton Road has a number of residential properties facing the school site along its length with one small car valeting business between the houses.

On the Eastern edge to Carrick Road the site is faced by the existing Creative Designs showrooms and offices alongside semidetached residential properties.

The southern edge is partially bounded by the mews lane and residential houses and gardens.

The main frontage of the former school faces north towards Ayr town Centre and Burns Statue Square.

- **Services {public utilities}**

The site is served by a full range of public utilities. This includes power, gas and water supplies and telecom installations. The installations have the capacity to support the new proposed development.

The site is drained by the public combined sewer systems under the public roads. again these have the capacity to support the proposed development.

- **Access, Parking and Circulation**

The proposal arrangement of car parking access to the site and buildings.

The new entrance to the building on the north elevation allows a level access entry to the heart of the building. This is complimented by subsidiary entrances to the residential units on the west elevation and the restaurant on the West.

The vehicle access is laid out in two separate area. An existing vehicle access on the west side gives access to a small parking area with six spaces predominately for staff and deliveries. One space is allocated to the existing janitors house.. A turning space is allowed for business deliveries.

A larger parking area is provided to the East with a new vehicle access off Carrick Road. This allows for eighteen spaces shared between the residential and retail uses. Two disabled spaces are provided as part of this provision.

Two areas of cycle parking are provided with ten cycle stands

- **Wider Geographical Accessibility**

Refer to Transport Statement

- Images of the Site (from outwith and within)



View looking South



View looking East



North elevation



Eastern area



Modern extensio



Western area

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

Before closure, the site was in use as a primary school for 190 years.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

It is generally agreed that inevitably the eventual outcome regarding the details of any proposals is underpinned by a number of considerations, namely:

- (i) the characteristics of the site and, in this case, its historic importance, its location and setting within both the broader and immediate townscape, including its location within the Ayr 2 Conservation Area
- (ii) the requirements of the relevant policies, guidance and advice referred to elsewhere in this report
- (iii) where appropriate, relevant material planning/non-planning considerations

(i) **the characteristics of the site and, in this case, building, its location and setting within both the broader and immediate townscape**

(ii) **the requirements of the relevant policies, guidance and advice**

Adopted South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2, August 2022

Caveat

In her letter of 8 February setting out the Transitional Arrangements for National Planning Framework 4, the Scottish Government's Chief Planner stated in relation to Applying NPF Policy that: *'It is recognised that it may take time for planning authorities and stakeholders to get to grips with NPF4 policies and, in particular, the interface with individual policies'*.

Experience elsewhere confirms that the overall situation re the actual application of policy is still very much in evolution mode and it is not possible to put a timescale on when 'stability' might be achieved. This Report has been written within what is still a relatively short time from the adoption of NPF4 on 13 February as part of the statutory development plan.

What is written immediately below is therefore essentially an attempt to identify those LDP2 policies that, in our opinion, are most likely to be still relevant to the determination of planning applications in this case.

At the Strategic Level

- **Core Principle B1**

'We will support the principles of sustainable economic development'.

The proposals represent an expansion of a long-standing local company in an accessible location.

- **Core Principle B4**

'We will Prioritise the regeneration of Town Centres'.

Although an edge of centre site, the Applicant's current business is virtually adjacent within the town centre and the proposals will be an extension of these. For the reasons set out later in this Statement, our opinion is that the proposals will not impact adversely on the vitality and viability of Ayr Town Centre. They are more likely to deliver the opposite, i.e. strengthen the town centre.

- **Core Principle C1**

'We will promote the sustainable use of natural, built and cultural resources'.

This will mean that the Council will:

'Ensure development proposals safeguard protected natural and build heritage'

Until it was acquired by the Applicant in June 2023, Ayr Grammar School had been unoccupied for over two years and was already suffering the impact of, albeit low-level, vandalism. The C-listed building is in a key location and, in townscape terms, prominent. Implementation of the proposals will guarantee the continued existence of this landmark building for decades to come. Lack of action would simply add it to the long list of long-term empty buildings in Ayr Town Centre, including Listed Buildings. It would fairly rapidly become a blot on the landscape.

The site is also at the boundary of the Ayr 2 Conservation Area in a prominent location. Any decline in the condition of the site as a whole and, in particular, that of the main school building, would eventually significantly impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development

The Council will support the principles of sustainable development by making sure that development meets the following standards:

- 'Respects, protects and, where possible, enhances ... built and cultural heritage resources'

Which the proposals will do.

- 'Does not have a negative effect on air or water quality'

It will not.

- 'Incorporates sustainable urban drainage and avoids increasing (and where possible reduces) risks of, or from, all forms of flooding'

The proposal primarily makes use of the existing drainage system to address issues of surface water. The key are intended to reduce and mitigate the surface water lies in the soft landscape and porous surface proposed in the new forecourt.

The introduction of self draining surface in lieu of the hard tarmac playground will significantly reduce the paving surface water run off into the combined sewage system.

SEPA Flood Risk Maps confirm that the site is free from flooding.

- 'Ensures appropriate provision for waste water treatment, etc'

The proposal as an existing school will discharge all waste water to existing foul sewers.

- 'Contributes to an efficient use of, or provision for, public services, facilities and infrastructure'

Neither 'public services' nor 'facilities' are defined in LDP2 Glossary of Terms. 'Infrastructure' is, however, defined as 'roads, sewers, schools and supplies of

gas, water, electricity, etc.' Schools will not be relevant as it is not anticipated that the proposals will significantly impact on local capacity.

- 'Embraces the principles of placemaking and the six qualities of place'

The place is already defined by the presence of long-established development. The character of the exterior of the building is unlikely to change greatly. The area of ground that was previously a school yard, will be landscaped to create a new public approach and garden area.

- 'Wherever possible, is in an accessible location ...'

Information provided elsewhere and in the Transport Statement that forms part of the planning application confirm the significant level of accessibility enjoyed by the site.

- 'Helps mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change'

The sustainable re-use of existing buildings is a major component in minimising the carbon footprint of an organisation. In this case all elements of the existing building are being put to beneficial use with no demolition. This ensures the construction phase carbon footprint is managed.

A key part of the proposals is to also improve the energy standards of the building and reduce its operational carbon footprint. Windows will be upgraded, roof insulation enhanced, external walls upgraded where possible and services installations brought up to current standards with enhanced control systems.

The installation of PV panels will add to the energy reduction of the finished complex.

- 'Includes micro-renewables, wherever appropriate'

On the specific matter of the installation of micro-renewables, HES's document 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Micro-renewables' offers options on the use of renewables on historic buildings.

In the proposal it is our intention to install solar photovoltaic panels on the inner slopes of the roof where there visibility is limited. This is in accordance with the guidance given by HES to avoid main roof slopes and focus on secondary slopes or slopes hidden from view

Strategic Policy 2: Development Management

The Council ‘... will ensure that development proposals’:

- ‘Are in accordance with the site’s land use, as defined in the Proposals Map’
As described earlier, the proposals require a Change of Use. The objective has been to ensure that the proposed changes are compatible with adjacent land uses and will not impact adversely on them.
- ‘Are appropriate in terms of layout, scale, massing, design and materials in relation to their surroundings and surrounding land uses’
To maintain the overall architectural integrity of the C-listed building substantially, there will be only marginal changes to the exterior of the main structure. What is proposed for the remainder of the site is small-scale and unobtrusive.
- ‘Do not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby land uses ...’
Amenity is defined in the Glossary as ‘*The pleasantness or attractiveness of a place. There are usually several elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historical buildings and the inter-relationship between them or less tangible factors such as tranquillity.*’

Previously as a school with all its attached levels of noise and activity, the proposals are likely to result in less impact than would have been the case in the past.
- ‘Are appropriate to the local area in terms of road safety, parking provision and effects on the transport network’
The Transport Statement sets out the characteristics of transport in the local context and in relation to the proposed development . This is included in the Appendix.
- ‘Are designed in a way that helps prevent crime’
The proposal seeks to provide a low crime solution. The mixed use ensures the building is occupied through out the day and night offering passive supervision.

The new landscaping and external lighting will provide a controlled external environment with CCTV coverage of the external areas. The deterrent effect of CTV, supervision and lighting will ensure that the site will no longer have its current vulnerability.

- ‘Are not within Health and Safety Executive safeguarding zones, etc’
The proposals are not within such a zone
- ‘Address issues of ground instability ...’
There are no issues of ground instability
- ‘Make appropriate provision for all infrastructure implications of the development’
The proposals will provide suitable infrastructure in terms of services installations, travel and access
- ‘Are located within a settlement boundary ...’
Situated within the Ayr settlement boundary as defined in the Proposals Map, a copy of which is to be found in page 17
- ‘Do not result in the loss of an area of maintained amenity or recreational space, etc’
There will be no such loss.

Subject Policies Assumed to Still be Relevant

LDP policy: office development

The Applicant has stated his intention to make the former Grammar School the headquarter office for Creative Designs.

The policy states that: *'Office development (as defined by Class 2 of the Use Classes Order will be directed to the peripheral retail area of town centres ...'*

The proposed location is very marginally outwith the boundary of Ayr Town Centre and close enough in practical terms to be viewed as an extension of the town centre peripheral area.

Any office floorspace not required for HQ purposes would be made available for rent. It is generally agreed that Ayr Town Centre possesses very little modern floorspace.

LDP policy: general retail

Sequential approach

The Council will *'guide uses which generate significant numbers of people including new retail, commercial leisure, office development, etc'* sequentially to: *'b. Edge of town centres'*, which is the case for the proposals.

The policy goes on to state that the Council *'will be flexible and realistic in applying the sequential approach to ensure that different uses are developed in the most appropriate locations.'*

LDP policy: leisure development

Edge of town centres are considered appropriate.

The Glossary does not provide any guidance as to what constitutes leisure but elements of the mixture of land uses proposed can, in our opinion, contribute to the creation of a leisure destination.

LDP policy: historic environment

Likely to have been replaced by NPF4 Policy 'Historic assets and places'.

Suffice to state that the proposals for the C-listed buildings will significantly extend their lives. The proposals, both for the inside and the outside of the buildings, will mean very little alteration and those for the site will otherwise protect the setting of the buildings and this part of the Ayr 2 Conservation Area.

LDP policy: land use and transport

Criterion 'e.' is relevant: *'links to existing and proposed active travel networks, including walking, cycling and public transport networks.'*

As confirmed elsewhere in this Statement, the site is in an accessible location near the edge of Ayr Town Centre.

Supplementary Guidance: Historic Environment

Supplementary Guidance Policy 1: Design Quality

The Council's General Criteria for New Development **have** been adhered to.

Supplementary Guidance Policy 2: Listed Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest

'The Council will presume in favour of protecting listed buildings and their settings, especially from inappropriate development and will actively encourage the sensitive maintenance, restoration and re-use of all such properties. Proposals affecting a listed building shall be expected to be of a quality commensurate with that of the original building to ensure the character of the building is not adversely impacted.'

Application of this principle has been central to the approach taken as confirmed by the Proposals described in Part 5.0 and the Planning Application Drawings.

Supplementary Guidance Policy 3: Conservation Areas

The proposed site falls within the boundary of Ayr 2 Conservation Area. The policy states: *'All new development within, or affecting the setting of, a conservation area shall be required to preserve or enhance its character or appearance.'*

Situated on the boundary edge of the Conservation Area, the site/ buildings play a particular role in the context of Ayr 2 as a whole. Apart from the site, Ayr 2 is virtually entirely residential in character and the site and its characteristics are therefore different. Occupying a prominent location, what happens to the site is important for Ayr 2 Conservation Area as a whole.

The proposals, in our opinion, are intended therefore to be broadly neutral in terms of the potential impact on the adjacent conservation area.

National Planning Framework 4

As stated on page 21 earlier, in relation to addressing those policies of LDP2 that are likely to still be relevant and those that might now have been replaced by NPF4 policies, those addressed below are the outcome of personal judgement.

Part 1 – A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045

In a general sense, all developments should be compatible with the broader strategic requirements set out here. The proposals are compatible with a number of the requirements of Spatial Principles, namely:

- Conserving and recycling assets
- Local living
- Compact urban growth

Part 2 – National Planning Policy

Sustainable Places

Policy 1: Tackling the climate and nature crises

The **Policy Intent** is described as 'To encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crises'.

Policy Outcomes: zero carbon, nature positive places.

- zero carbon. The details of the response are to be found in Part 5.0

- nature positive places. Currently, there is little evidence of the site making any discernible contribution to biodiversity. The garden and planted forecourt includes the introduction of new planting and soft natural surfaces.. The landscaping elements of the proposals will , therefore enhance the potential for small scale wildlife and biodiversity .

Policy 2: Climate mitigation and adaptation

The **Policy Intent** is 'To encourage, promote and facilitate development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change.'

The sustainable re-use of existing buildings is a major component in minimising the carbon footprint and emissions of this organisation..

A key part of the proposals is to also improve the energy standards of the building and reduce its operational carbon footprint. Windows will be upgraded, roof insulation enhanced, external walls upgraded where possible and services installations brought up to current standards with enhanced control systems.

The installation of PV panels will add to the energy reduction of the finished complex.

Policy 3: Biodiversity

The **Policy Intent** is 'To protect biodiversity, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks.'

As stated in response to Policy 1 above, the current biodiversity value is likely to be low. South Ayrshire Council's Environment and Conservation mapping does not identify the site as falling within any of the categories listed there.

Criterion c) of Policy 3 states:

'Proposals for local development [the proposals fall into this category] will include measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with national and local guidance. Measures should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development.'

In providing a response, it is important to be aware of the actual current characteristics of what the site was used for, i.e. a school building, associated janitor's house and yard area. The proposals include introducing areas of soft landscape and planting. This will

be in the new forecourt landscape plan and the provision of new garden areas to the ground floor residential units. While not extensive these new areas of landscape will, compared with the current situation, increase the potential of the site to contribute to biodiversity.

Policy 7: Historic assets and places

The **Policy Intent** is 'To protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places.'

The building does not yet appear on the Buildings at Risk Register but signs of vandalism are increasing.

Policy Outcomes:

(i)

- The historic environment is valued, protected, and enhanced, supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change
- Redundant or neglected historic buildings are brought back into sustainable and productive uses
- Recognise the social, environmental and economic value of the historic environment to our economy and cultural identity

The proposals set out to achieve the requirements of all three Policy Outcomes.

- (ii) a) Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic assets and/or place. The assessment should identify the likely visual or physical impact of any proposals for change, including cumulative effects and provide a sound basis for managing the impacts of change.
Proposals should also be informed by national policy and guidance on managing change in the historic environment, and information held within Historic Environment Records.

The proposals will not have a significant impact on the listed building as the details provided in Part 5.0 confirm.

The proposals, as this Statement and that in support of the Listed Building Application confirm, have been informed by national policy and guidance on managing change in the historic environment.

- (iii) c) Development proposals for the reuse, alteration or extension of a listed building will only be supported where they will preserve its character, special architectural or historic interest and setting. Development proposals affecting the setting of a listed building should preserve its character, and its special architectural or historic interest.

The proposals will involve relatively limited changes to both the interior and exterior of the listed building.

- (iv) d) Development proposals in or affecting conservation areas will only be supported where the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting is preserved or enhanced.'

The site falls within the Ayr 2 Conservation Area. The drawings submitted as part of the application, in our opinion, confirm that the proposals will not alter, in visual/ townscape terms, the current relationship between the site and the neighbouring Conservation Area.

Policy 9: Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

The **Policy Intent** is 'To encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of ... vacant ... land and buildings ...'

Policy Outcomes: 'Derelict buildings and spaces are regenerated to improve wellbeing and transform our places.'

The site is not yet derelict but is vacant and signs of vandalism are clear. The site is in a prominent location on the A79 on one of the main entry points to Ayr Town Centre from the south. To allow any further deterioration would certainly impact on the broader environment. Ayr Town Centre is in the unfortunate position of having one of the major concentrations of vacant listed buildings in the country as well as an otherwise high retail outlet vacancy rate. The proposals are therefore a rare example in Ayr of an opportunity to contribute to regeneration.

Policy 12: Zero waste

The **Policy Intent** is *'To encourage, promote and facilitate development that is consistent with the waste hierarchy.'*

Criterion b) (i) states: *'reuse existing buildings and infrastructure.'* Clearly, the proposals are an example of this.

Policy 13: Sustainable transport

Refer to the Transport Statement prepared by McIlhagger Associates which forms part of the planning application.

Liveable Places

The **Policy Intent** is *'To encourage, promote and facilitate well-designed development that makes successful places by taking a design-led approach and applying the Place Principle.'*

Policy Outcomes:

- *Quality places, spaces and environments*
- *Places that consistently deliver healthy, pleasant, distinctive, connected, sustainable and adaptable qualities*

Criterion a) states: *'Development proposals will be designed to improve the quality of an area whether in urban or rural locations and regardless of scale.'*

Ayr Grammar School has made a considerable contribution to the overall quality of the townscape here. Its repurposing, based on relatively limited changes to its fabric – both externally and internally – will mean that a building that might have faced a very

uncertain future will now continue to make a high-quality contribution to the environment in this part of the town.

Policy 15: Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods

Currently, there is no guidance from the Planning Authority re the identification locally of 20 minute neighbourhoods.

If these eventually are to be based on wellbeing, being on the edge of the town centre, the development is obviously well within 20 minutes of a range of town centre facilities. Otherwise, the proposals are, by virtue of its land use, themselves intended to 'strengthen' the viability of this part of the town centre.

Policy 16: Infrastructure first

The **Policy Intent** is *'To encourage, promote and facilitate an infrastructure first approach to land use planning, which puts infrastructure considerations at the heart of placemaking.'*

The proposals take advantage of existing infrastructure structures and it is envisaged that there will be no capacity issues.

Productive Places

Policy 27: City, town, local and commercial centres

The **Policy Intent** is: *'To encourage, promote and facilitate development in our city and town centres, recognising they are a national asset. This will be achieved by applying the Town Centre First approach.'*

Importantly, criterion b) (ii) confirms that *'edge of centre options'* are included in the Town Centre First approach.

Not forgetting the fact that there are other policies that support the underlying arguments underpinning the proposals, they will contribute to the Policy Outcomes re Policy 27.

In the case of Ayr, the proposals would contribute to the restoration of the town centre as a 'vibrant, healthy, creative, enterprising, accessible and resilient place' and would themselves be in a sustainable location re transport.

Policy 28: Retail

The **Policy Intent** is 'To encourage, promote and facilitate retail investment to the most sustainable locations that are most accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes.'

This point has been confirmed earlier.

Policy Outcomes:

'Retail development and the location of shops support ... town ... centres.'

This point has been confirmed earlier. An important detail is that the proposed retailing floorspace will be occupied by the Applicant to accommodate an expansion to his business. It will not, in fact, be new floorspace competing with vacant floorspace elsewhere in the town centre, and otherwise is a confirmation of the Applicant's loyalty to an Ayr Town Centre option.

Historic Environment Policy for Scotland 2019

The proposals have been conceived and developed in accordance with the relevant policies in HEP1, HEP2, HEP4 and HEP5, the wording of which is as follows:

HEP1

Decisions affecting any part of the historic environment should be informed by an inclusive understanding of its breadth and cultural significance.

HEP2

Decisions affecting the historic environment should ensure that its understanding and enjoyment, as well as its benefits, are secured for present and future generations.

HEP4

Changes to specific assets and their context should be managed in a way that protects the historic environment. Opportunities for enhancement should be identified where appropriate.

If detrimental impact on the historic environment is unavoidable, it should be minimised. Steps should be taken to demonstrate that alternatives have been explored, and mitigation measures should be put in place.

HEP5

Decisions affecting the historic environment should contribute to the sustainable development of communities and places.

Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings

The Key Message on page 4 of this document, in addition to the policies of the above, have underpinned the approach taken – the key message being **'keeping a listed building in use.'**

- Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Setting, 2016
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Use and Adaptation of Listed Schools
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Use of Micro-renewables

To varying degrees, the advice/guidance provided by the following have also been taken into account:

Other Relevant Material Considerations

- (i) South Ayrshire Economic Development Strategy 2013 – 23, SAC
- (ii) South Ayrshire Strategic Economic Plan – Vision, June 2021

Both documents attach importance to the encouragement, development and growth of local businesses.

KEY MESSAGES

1. The listed buildings in Scotland reflect a wide range of our history and culture. They celebrate the diversity of our communities at every level, showing national, regional and local distinctiveness. They contribute to our well-being culturally, socially and economically. We can't have these benefits without caring for these buildings. We need to make sure they have a long term future if we want to benefit from in them in the long-term.
2. A listed building can't be replaced once it's gone. Demolishing a listed building is always a loss. It is a last resort when every other option has been explored. The best way to protect our buildings is usually to keep them in use – and if that isn't possible, to find a new use that has the least possible effect on the things that make the building special.
3. Decisions about listed buildings should always focus on the qualities that make them important – their special interest. Lots of things can contribute to a building's special interest, but the key factor when we're thinking about making changes will be its overall historic character.
4. For a building to stay in use over the long term, change will be necessary. This reflects changes over time in how we use our buildings and what we expect of them. This should always be considered carefully and avoid harming the building's special interest. A building's long-term future is at risk when it becomes hard to alter and adapt it when needed. Proposals that keep buildings in use, or bring them back into use, should be supported as long as they do the least possible harm.
5. Alterations to a building, even if they are extensive, will be better than losing the building entirely. If the only way to save a building is a radical intervention, we have to avoid being too cautious when we look at the options. If a building might be totally lost, we should be open to all the options to save it.
6. Keeping a listed building in use has wider benefits. Listed buildings contribute to their wider surroundings and community. They can influence proposals for new development, and inspire positive change. They teach us about what people value in the places they live, work, and spend time in, and so they help us to build successful places.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 KEY CONCEPTS

The key aim for the design of the proposals is to create a new sustainable business base for an existing successful local business.

The programme for the building describes a mixed use concept which allows a range of economic activity under one roof. This includes

- retail
- hospitality
- residential

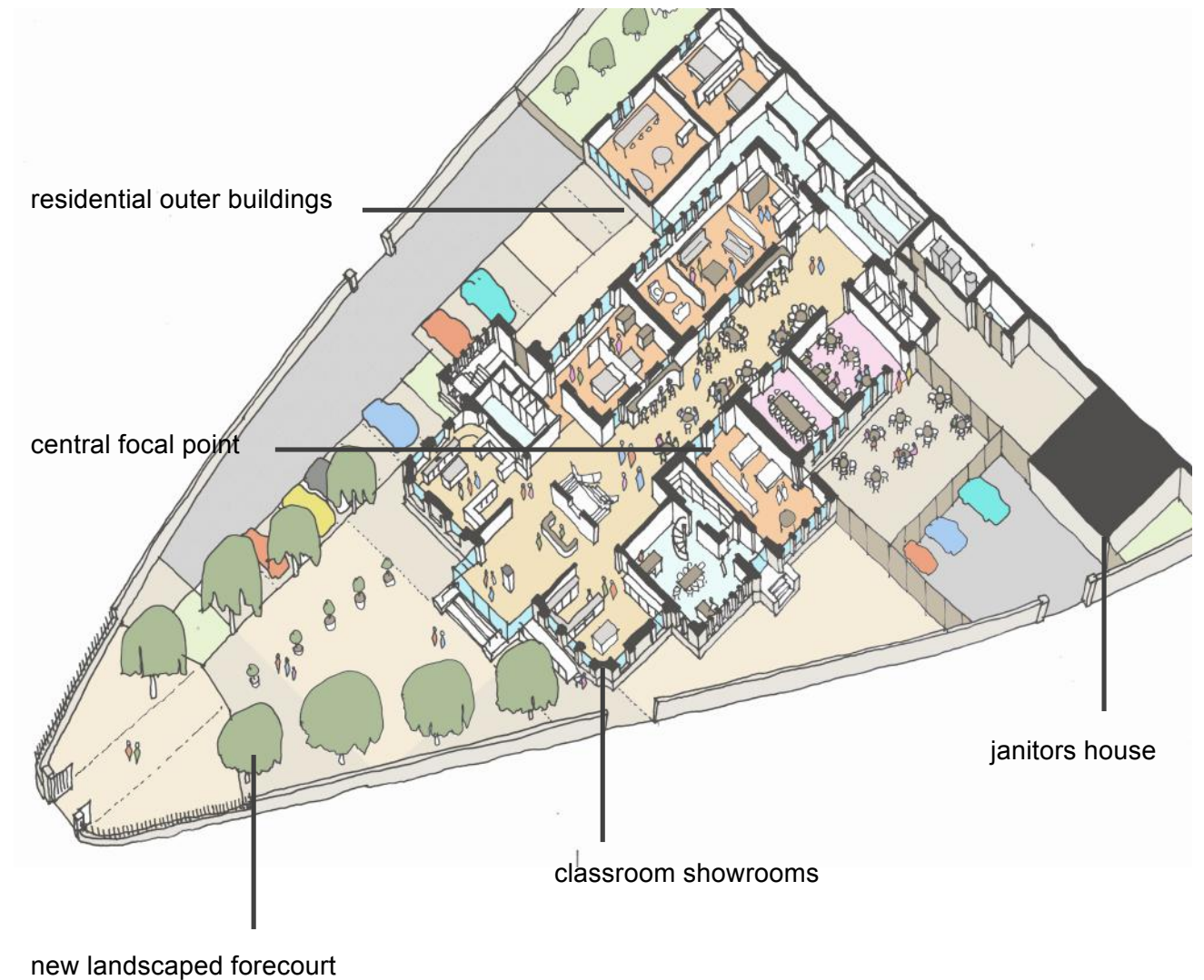
providing a model based on varied sources of income.

The key design issues concern mapping this variety of uses into an existing historic building which provide appropriate spaces for each function while ensuring the qualities of the building are enjoyed and enhanced.

The key design concept were therefore

- retention of the existing ground floor classrooms in their existing open format with internal fittings and finishes retained
- the use of the central focal points of staircase and rooflight gymnasium as the main public spaces for hospitality
- incorporation of residential use into the smaller separate ground floor ancillary structures
- use of the more private upper floor for residential use
- providing a new landscaped setting for the building frontage

ORIGINAL CONCEPT VIEW



5.2 PLANNING WITHIN A HISTORIC BUILDING

The floor plans of the proposal have been developed to minimize the extent of alterations to the existing building fabric. The main structural elements of the building are mostly left untouched with modern erroneous additions removed. The new insertions are lightweight non-structural elements to provide the spaces required for the new uses.

This allows the existing spaces to be retained and enjoyed in their original spatial arrangements. In particular the focus on the central gymnasium as a restaurant and the existing stairwell cleared of modern additions brings a new sense of significance to these original spaces.



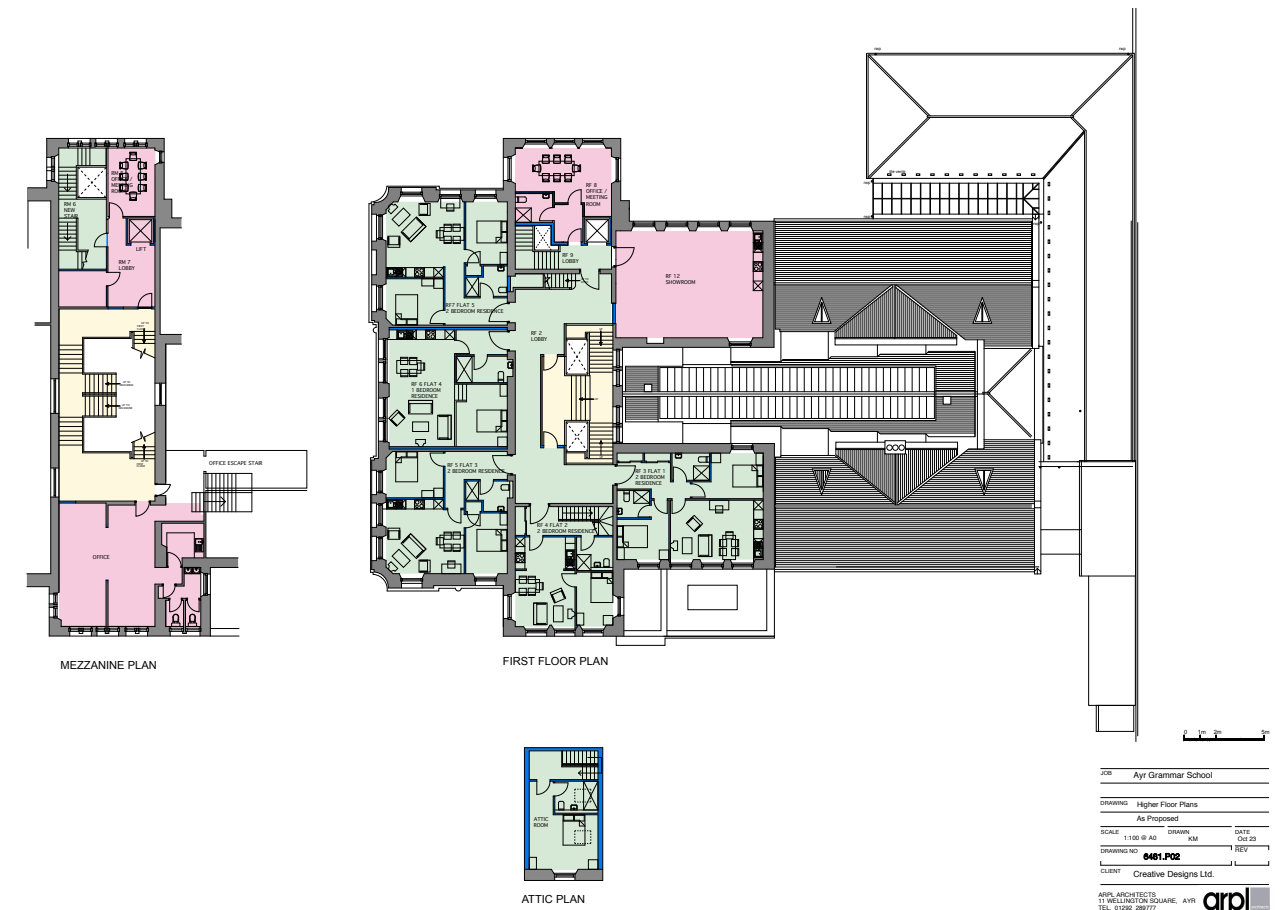
Central focal point

In order to meet the needs of the new uses the proposals include two interventions in the building

- a new entrance is proposed to the north elevation. This provides a visible accessible entrance to the public areas of the building
- a new private stair and lift are proposed to serve the residential upper floor. This is being inserted into the ancillary areas of the building

These two additions have been designed to respond to the existing character of the former school.

The overall planning provides a respectful and considered approach to re-occupying the listed building.



5.3 ENTRANCE PORCH

The most significant intervention in the existing building is the creation of a new front entrance and porch.

The former school relied upon two small boys and girls entrances at the "transept" of the plan. These lead to a very low ceiling space adjacent to the banks of toilets. This is an appropriate solution for a school however as a new business and focal point for the town these low key entrances do not provide adequate entry for what is now a public facility.

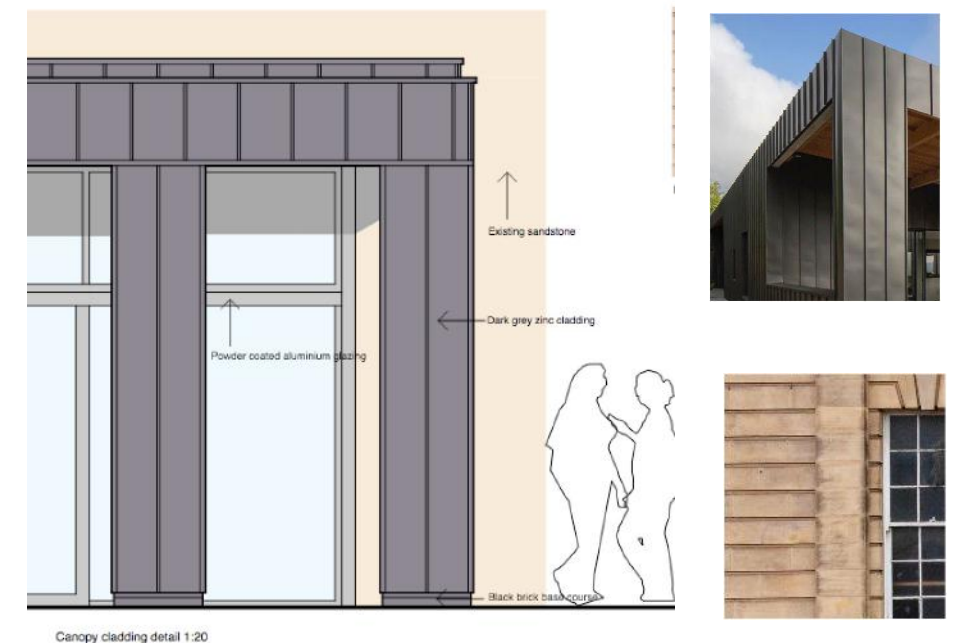
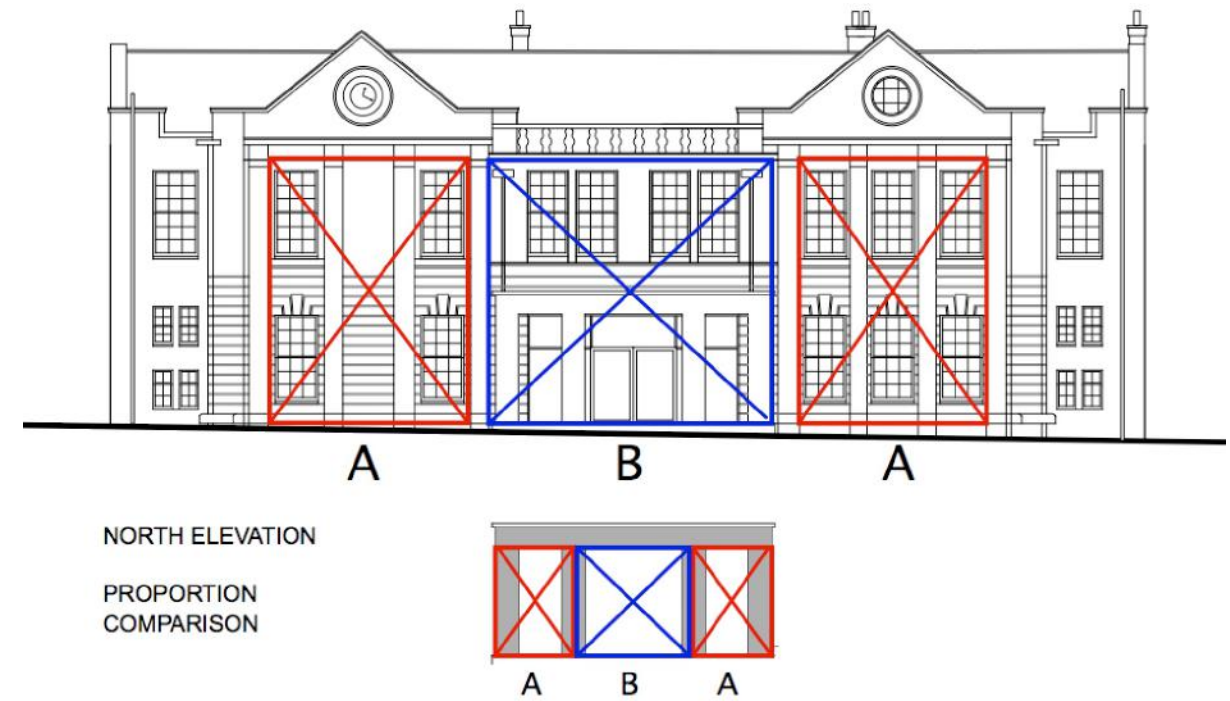
We therefore explored options for the creation of a new entrance. Alternative locations on the sides of the building while providing access did not address the importance of legibility – providing a clear entry point – and undermined the symmetrical nature of the main plan with its stair and central gymnasium. The conclusion was that a new central entrance would best reflect the existing building and provide a new front face to the town.

The design developed is a single storey portico – a small scale addition which allows the main façade to retain its prominence while delivering on the core concept.

In developing the design our starting point was to examine the proportion and rhythm of the existing façade. This is a three bay façade with two outer pedimented bays and a central orthogonal portion – an A - B - A rhythm of rectangles and square. This became the guiding proportion for the new porch with a three bay A B A subdivision and rectangle and square proportions.

The resulting design provides a well proportioned central entrance subservient to the main façade but with its own presence and scale. It respects the symmetrical nature of the elevation complementing the original building design concept.

The porch is proposed to be clad in a dark grey zinc cladding a modern but complementary material. This approach is intended to achieve a " deferential contrast " - as described in " Managing Change" by HES.



5.3 EXTERNAL ADDITIONS

The overall proposal involves two other external interventions – a small extension to the rear of the janitors house and the overcladding of the classroom annexe on the west. The aim is for these three elements to belong to the same design "family" with a common cladding material.

Each of these has the same zinc cladding – a modest recessive material against the solid stone of the school.

5.4 INTERNAL ALTERATIONS

The principal internal design interventions are focused on the re-creation of a dramatic central atrium through the building. The entry sequence of new porch, reception, tall stair well and central rooflit restaurant are the focal point.

The removal of unfortunate modern storage towers in the stair opens up the stairwell, allowing light from the rooflights to flood into the interior. this then leads to the main hospitality venue, the restaurant. Within this space new glazed screens allow views into and out of the adjoining wings giving both visual connection and introducing more light to the interior.

A family of additions.



5.5 RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS

The proposals for the upper floor involve the creation of five new apartments. These complement the three stand alone ground floor residences.

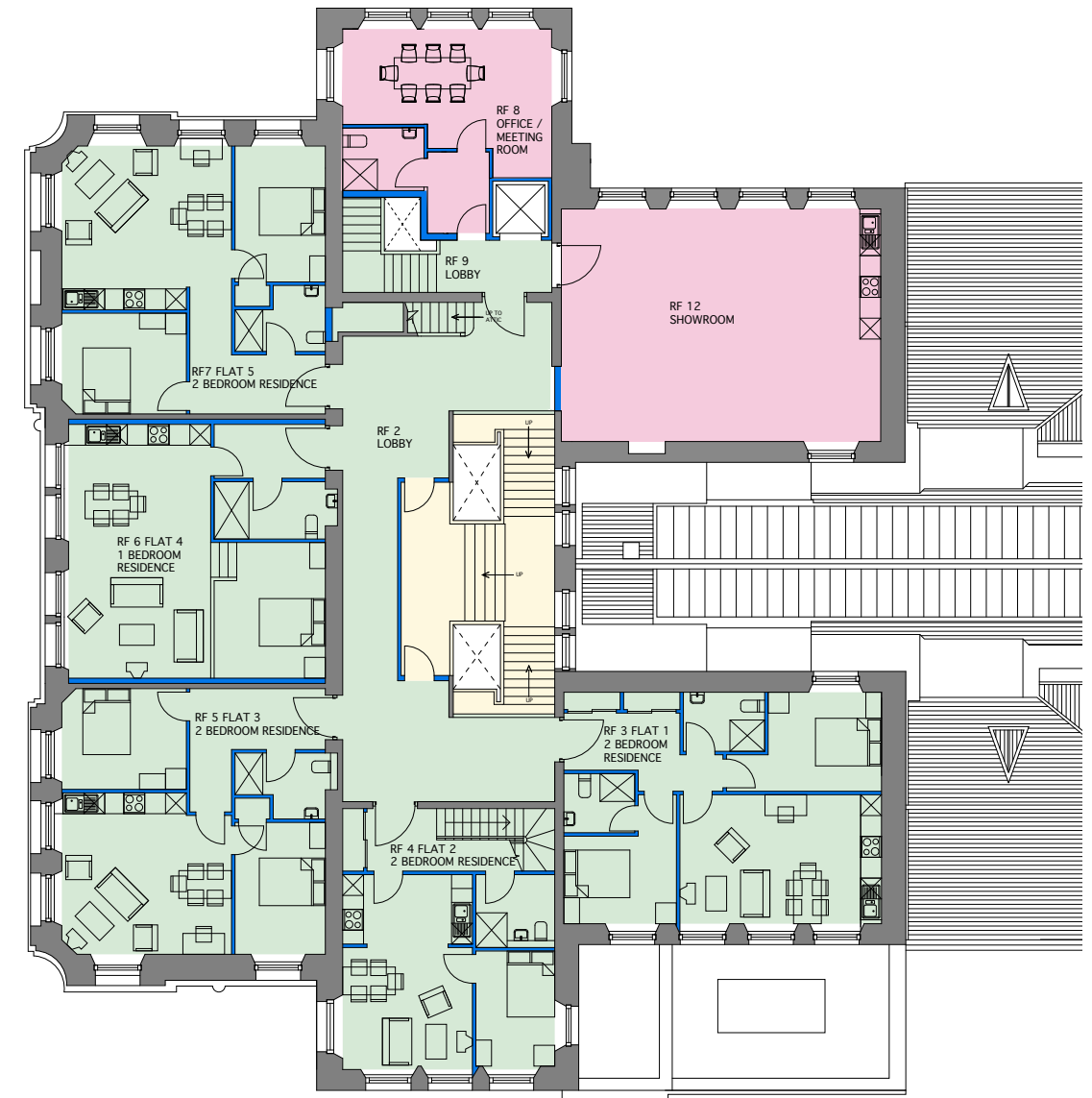
the upper apartments are four two bedroom units and one single bedroom flat. The ground floor residences provide three two bedroom units.

The upper floor apartments are formed by inserting one apartment into each existing classroom space. This approach maintains the integrity of the original classroom spaces wrapping around the rooflit central stairwell. One unit extends up into the attic spaces taking advantage of the existing attic windows on the south elevation.

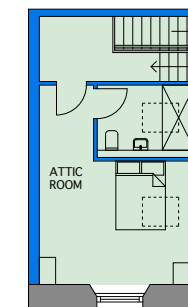
Within the flats the main external wall internal finishes are retained in particular the vertical boarded dado paneling retaining some of the character of the original spaces.

The apartments are accessed via a new entry and escape stair in the eastern "transept" wing. A lift provides an accessible entryway alongside the stair. The alterations this requires involve secondary ancillary spaces and does not impact on the principal spaces of the school.

Internal fittings and finishes will all be to a high standard. Creative Design's principal business is the design and installation of kitchens alongside home furnishing partners. Their skills will be employed in the fit out of each apartment ensuring attractive and popular residences.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



ATTIC PLAN

6.0 ACCESS STATEMENT

The new proposals provide fully accessible accommodation with new accessible entrances, lift access to upper floor and wheelchair parking spaces.

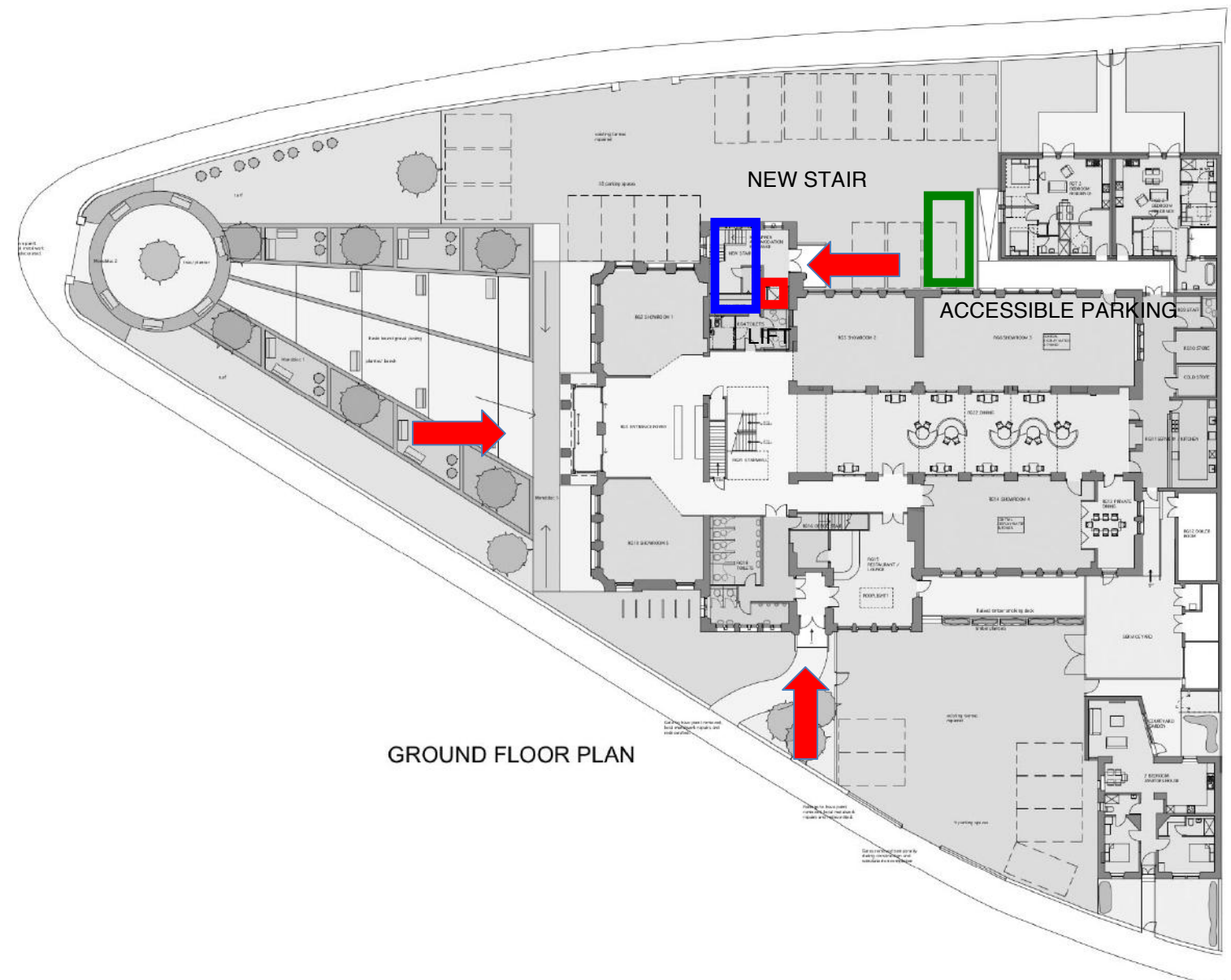
At the main entrance the re-landscaping of the forecourt allows the ground level to be adjusted to give step free access to the ground floor. The front entrance doors will be fitted with automatic openers for ease of use. Ramped access will also be provided to the two side entrances giving access to the restaurant and residential accommodation.


Within the building a new easy going stair and lift access is provided to access the upper floor giving barrier free access throughout.

New accessible sanitary facilities are being provided inside the building on the ground floor for both public and staff.

The detail of the proposals allows for internal accessible fit out with the use of colour, and texture to distinguish between surfaces and allow ease of movement for the visually impaired.

These steps ensure an accessible and welcoming building complex for all users.



 ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES

7.0

SUMMARY / CONCLUSIONS

- It is understood that South Ayrshire Council has not recently carried out a 'health check' of circumstances pertaining in Ayr Town Centre which would include a review of vacant properties across the board. Informal sources suggest that vacancy rates among retail units is over 40%. Ayr Town Centre also contains a concentration of listed buildings and again, while no precise figures are available, it is probably safe to state that many are vacant and unused
- With this as a context, it is important to appreciate that the proposals are a manifestation of a level of commitment to Ayr Town Centre on behalf of the Applicant rarely witnessed these days
- The former school would become the Design Centre and Flagship HQ for the three aspects of the business – Retail, Hospitality and Residential.
- The former Ayr Grammar School, located as it is on the A79, sits at one of the main entry/exit points into Ayr Town Centre from the south in the first instance, and to the north in the second. The term 'gateway location' could be considered appropriate
- Ayr Grammar School has made a considerable contribution to the overall quality of the townscape, in particular its imposing front elevation, which, along with the Town Hall, effectively bookends the commercial uses of the High Street. Its repurposing, based on relatively limited changes to its fabric – both externally and internally – will mean that a building that might have faced a very uncertain future will now continue to make a high-quality contribution to the environment in this part of the town
- The proposals brought forward by Creative Designs have been underpinned by the requirements of relevant planning policy, advice and guidance and, where appropriate, material considerations
- Historic Environment Scotland, in its document Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings, one of its key messages is
- *'Alterations to a building, even if they are extensive, will be better than losing the building entirely'*
- The proposed changes in this instance will be substantially unobtrusive
- In relation to any concerns re potential impact on town centre retailing, an important detail is that the proposed retailing floorspace will be occupied by the Applicant to accommodate an expansion to his business. It will not, in fact, be new floorspace competing with vacant floorspace elsewhere in the town centre, and otherwise is a confirmation of the Applicant's loyalty to an Ayr Town Centre option
- *'Bringing what is normally out of town retail into the heart of the town will provide a major new addition to Ayr in the strategic location.'*
- *The school is a much-loved building in the town, with many residents having attended the school in their early years. The plan for a mix of large-item retail with an element of hospitality will allow the public to continue to enjoy the qualities of this important building in contrast to any restricted private use. The central hallway in the former gymnasium will be an open airy public space*



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