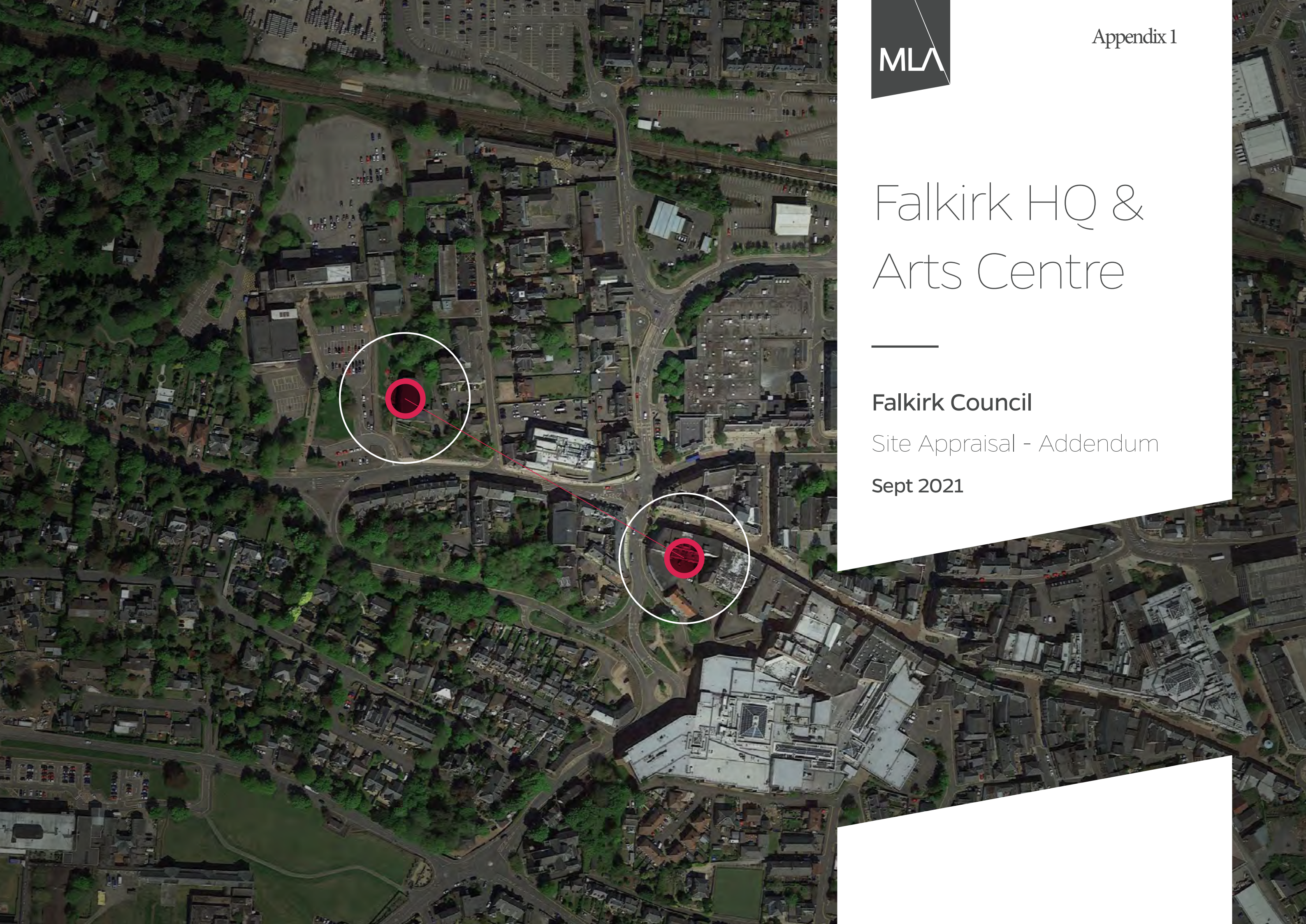


Falkirk HQ & Arts Centre

Falkirk Council

Site Appraisal - Addendum

Sept 2021



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

FUTURE OF FALKIRK TOWN CENTRE

Falkirk Council are investing in the future civic estate of the town to service the communities of Falkirk as a whole. The investment brings together civic, and administrative functions for the Council, and merges with arts and cultural facilities.

The Falkirk area has been on a journey of regeneration for several years with the creation of projects nearby such as The Falkirk Wheel and The Kelpies created to draw investment and tourism to the area.

Currently, Falkirk Town Hall is part of the Municipal Buildings located in a mainly residential area on the western periphery of the town. The buildings opened in 1967 and it has now been widely recognised that the complex is in need of replacement. Falkirk Council has accepted that the complex does not have a sustainable long term future and wish to replace their current Civic HQ within new facilities, ideally in the town centre.

The Council envisages that a new HQ, coupled with a distinct cultural offer, is critical to re-animating the town centre which has seen a recent decline due to wider pressures on traditional retailers as has been common with many similarly sized town centres.

The Council's requirement for a new HQ and arts centre was identified in the decision taken at their meeting on the 30 September 2020, and summarised as:

- a HQ with the provision for 200 workstations;
- a 550 seat theatre and arts centre facility with associated studio and ancillary spaces;
- relocation of Falkirk Library & Central Hub to the new facility.

Options across 5 sites were proposed at this time for a combined facility that included both Arts Centre and HQ Office.

- In June 2021, the decision was taken that the Municipal and High St/ Cockburn Sites were preferred. MLA we asked to provide a further option (option A) for splitting the HQ facility to be located at the Municipal Site and the remainder of the Arts centre at the High St / Cockburn Site. The previous option (Option B) for a combined facility was to be reviewed but retained at the High St/ Cockburn Site.



“Create a legible town centre, with vibrancy, relevant to local communities and visitors”

“A place that is powerful to draw people away from default choices and other areas across central Scotland”

“fits the grain of the town. Create something which helps connect the different quarters of the town centre, their atmospheres and functions. Create places within the place.”

INTRODUCTION

This document is an addendum to the previous options appraisal report to the review of options from the June Council. It provides an overview of the decision to provide two options over two sites that have been designated by Falkirk Council as suitable locations for the development(s).

Option A- Standalone office HQ on the Municipal Site with Arts Centre, Library, Central Hub (inc Members Chamber)on Cockburn/High St site

and;

Option B - Combined Arts centre and office HQ (all functions) located at the Cockburn St/High St site

Both options have their own benefits and disadvantages and, with this addendum document, we have progressed proposals for each of the above.

We look forward to finalising the proposals with the Council and Stakeholders to create a truly significant project of national importance for this historic town.

Design Team:

Architect:



Theatre Consultant:



Structural Engineer:



Services Engineer:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Following from the previous study, Two options are now proposed over Two sites.

OPTION A

Theatre, Hub, Studios (inc Members Chamber) & Library at the Cockburn/High St Site

The HQ office at the Municipal site.

OPTION B

Combined Theatre, Hub, Studios (inc Chamber), Library and Office HQ at the Cockburn/High St Site

The Key Project Ambitions remain as previous

POWER OF ATTRACTION

A place that is powerful to draw people away from default choices.

A WELCOMING PLACE

A place people enjoy going to. It has things that offer interest and excitement.

HERITAGE AND A SENSE OF PLACE

A place that tips the hat to heritage, and is forward looking with imaginative design which also tackles climate change.

SMART TECHNOLOGY

A place that support the new digital generation with ideas and concepts to engage them.

WELL CONNECTED

A place with a sense of arrival, a bit of wow, something special. Help to develop the town centre as a destination and is easy to get into.

VALUE TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY

A place that's different from everywhere else and encourages people to stay because of the facilities which meet the multiple, changing and future needs of communities and visitors.

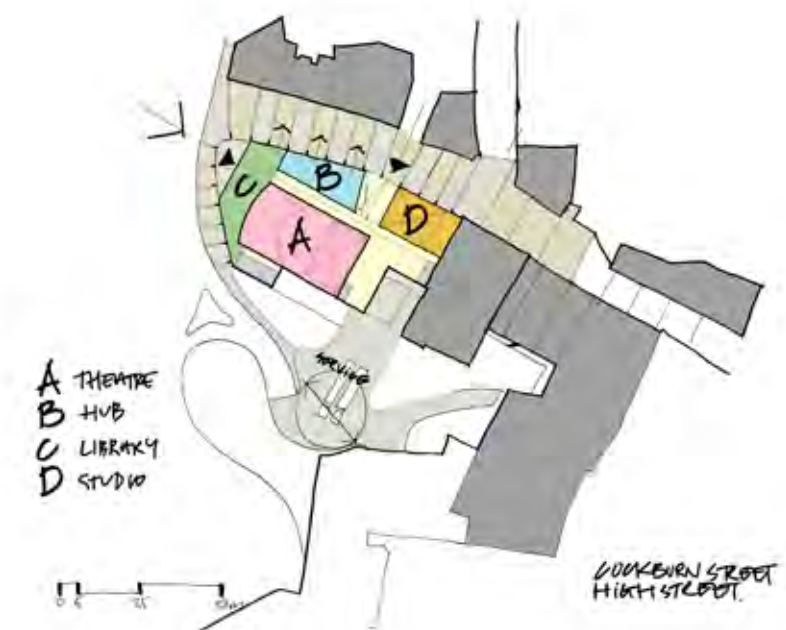
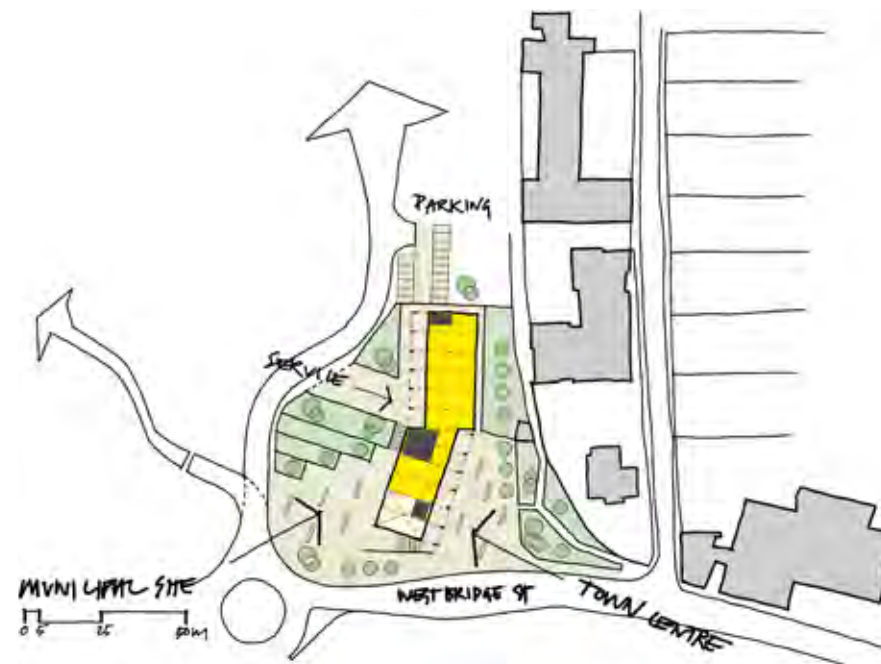
Regeneration and investment trigger

A place with a reputation for being vibrant, open for business, a place for 21st century innovation.

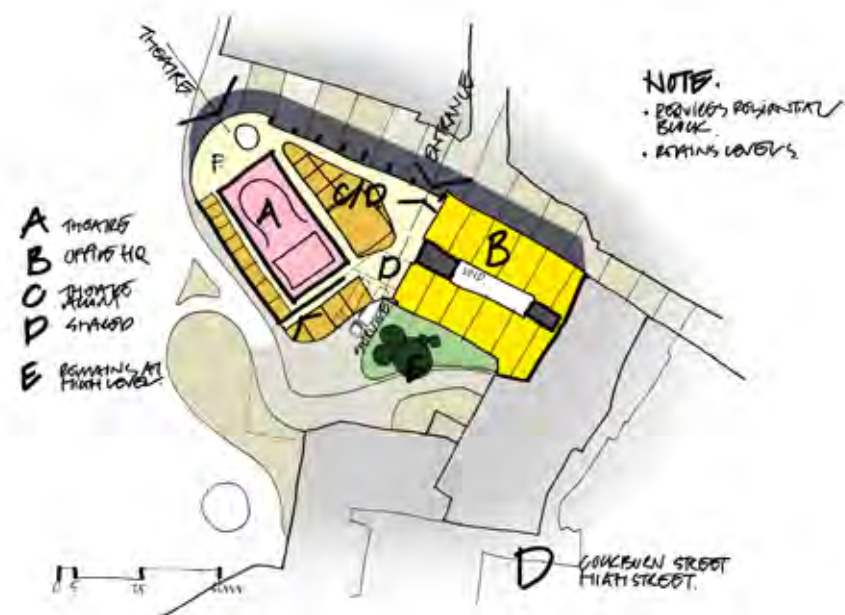
OPTION A - MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS



OPTION A - COCKBURN STREET



OPTION B - COCKBURN STREET



PROJECT AMBITION

The ambitious proposal to create a new combined or separate HQ and Arts Centre in the town centre will provide the opportunity to create a stimulating, engaging and valuable asset for Falkirk. Creating a compelling and distinct cultural offer for the area with appeal to audiences (local, regional and tourist), and be representative of Falkirk's strong cultural identity. It is envisaged that the new facility will be significant strand in the regeneration of Falkirk Town Centre. Acting as a catalyst which demonstrates positive regeneration by replacing currently under utilised sites, and create new active frontages.

A trip to the theatre must have something of an occasion about it, creating an environment that allows visitors to disengage from their own world and enter another. It is not sufficient to get the audience within sight and sound of the stage and to assume that art will have its way – the building must assist in the preparation of the audience and in giving them a pleasurable, valuable experience. The opportunity for it to do this lies in the journey from the “Street to Seat”. This journey should have a character to it which is consistent with the concept of theatre.

The creation of a modern Council HQ will enable the to co-location with partner organisations “under one roof”, leading to integrated and improved service delivery where community services are enhanced and celebrated. With a focus on wellbeing and sustainability there are opportunities for improved staff satisfaction and greater operational efficiencies. In turn this will create a new image of Falkirk Council leading to improved internal and external council perception, improved community relations, and civic pride.

THE EVERYMAN THEATRE, MANCHESTER

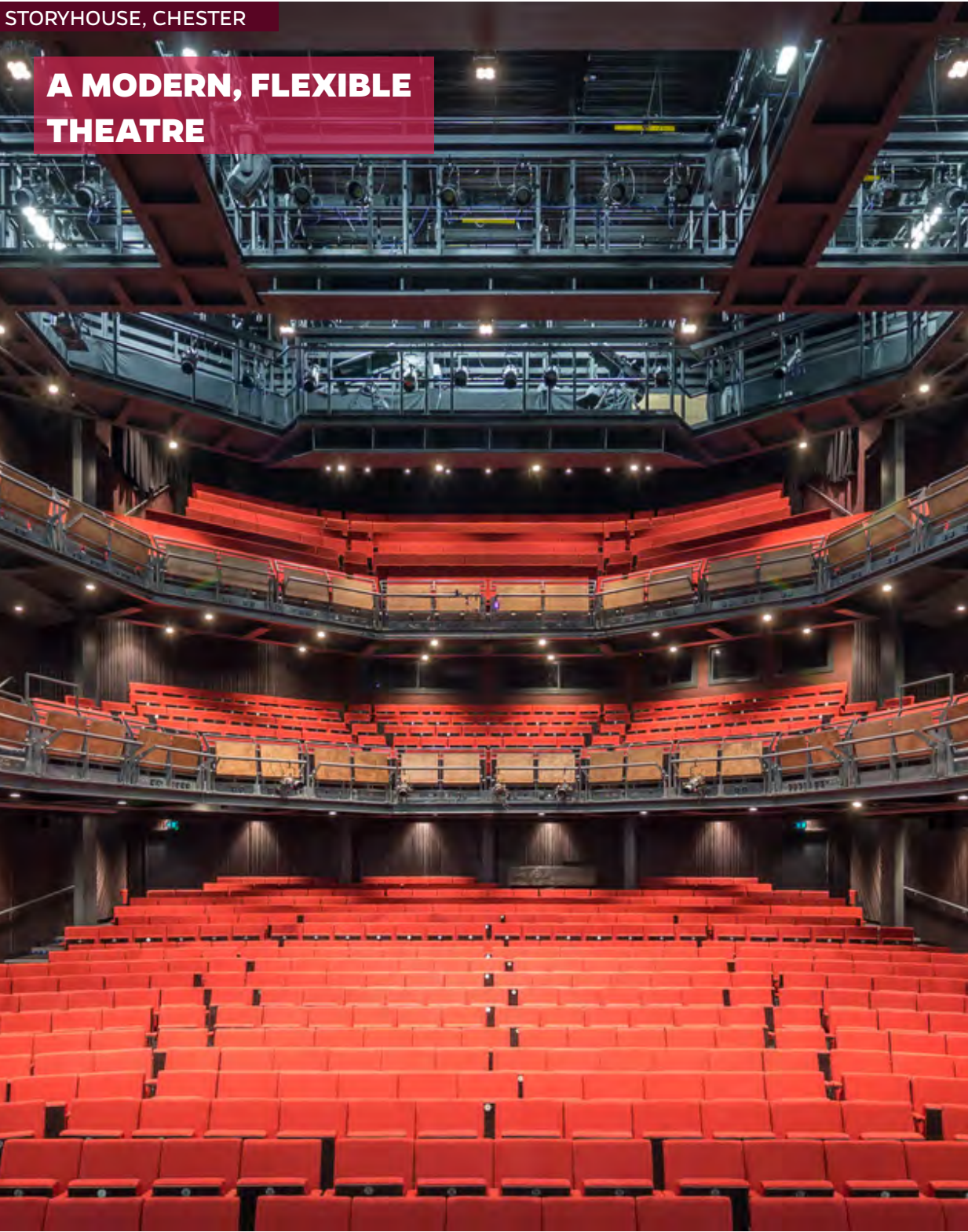


**A CULTURAL
STREET PRESENCE**

THE CUBE, CORBY



**STRONG, CIVIC
ARCHITECTURE**





SECTION 01

Preferred Sites

Municipal Site
Cockburn/High Street

PREFERRED SITES

Two sites have now been selected as suitable locations for redevelopment.

Both sites offer potential opportunities and challenges when assessed against outward connections, ownership, buildability, regenerative affects and cultural value.

Looking from west to east along the High Street the sites are:

Municipal Buildings;
Cockburn Street / High Street ;

Municipal

**Cockburn/
High St.**

MUNICIPAL

- Easy vehicle access from the west
- Farthest site from primary public transport links
- Opportunity to create gateway icon to the town
- Single ownership under Falkirk Council
- Part development of site allows rest of site to be sold for residential
- Disconnected to rest of town centre
- Minimal opportunity to regenerate High Street
- Lack of connection to heritage
- Ample space for parking to wider site

COCKBURN / HIGH STREET

- Easy vehicle access
- Close links to bus and train
- Opportunity to create gateway icon to the town
- Complex ownerships
- Challenging topography
- Allows entire municipal site to be sold for development
- Connected to pedestrian areas
- Potential to regenerate town centre
- Links to heritage
- Removes vacant and underutilised retail space

OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL SITES
COCKBURN / HIGH STREET



Located at the western edge of the High Street and curving down and around Cockburn Street the site affords a prominent location at the western entry to the town centre. With direct access to the A803 it is directly accessible from all directions and located close to the Howgate shopping centre offering car parking. In addition it is the closest site to the Upper Newmarket Street bus hub and within easy walking distance to Falkirk Grahamston Train Station.

Development of the new facility would require the acquisition and demolition of various properties within the site. Ownerships of the existing properties are complex with various ownership types - both commercial and residential. However, any development would remove outdated assets and accommodation, offering the potential to attract new investors into the surrounding area.

In addition to the complex ownership the site is split between different levels with complex level arrangements likely to require areas of retention to the High Street side of the site. The challenging level differences do however offer a natural access solution for HGV vehicles servicing the theatre at the lower level to the rear.

The prominent location at the Western flank of the High Street would allow the site to present a new 21st Century gateway into the town centre positively contributing to the emerging cultural regeneration corridor between the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies. In turn this could provide a major regenerative effect to the town centre with patrons of the facility more likely to explore and use the other businesses within the town. Any new development would be able to create a dialogue with the historic High Street driving up cultural engagement with the history of the town and engaging visitors and locals alike.

OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL SITES

MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS



Located to the west of the town centre the Municipal Buildings site is wholly owned by Falkirk Council and is the current location of the Falkirk Council HQ and Falkirk Town Hall. As such the site is an established civic location with the local community and any future development could build from the positive relationships currently established. Camelon Road is the main access to the town for visitors from the M80 or those coming into the town from the Falkirk Wheel. However, while offering good road connections it is one of the furthest sites from Falkirk's two train stations and the central bus hub on Upper Newmarket Street.

Development of the new build would be facilitated by the demolition of the existing collection of buildings. This in turn would open the site for future development, with possible partnerships with residential developers. This directs any development of the site to the eastern flank, with the closest connections to the town centre. However, the changing topography across the site would require significant excavation and retention to provide a suitable area for the new development.

Although providing positive outward connections the site's disconnection to the town centre would not bring direct regenerative effects to the centre, with many patrons likely to arrive and leave the site without any further exploration into the centre. In turn this would weaken the further regenerative and business opportunities to the rest of the town.

The prominent location of the site would allow any development to act as a strong modern gateway into the town and has the potential to create a new 21st Century image of the town. However, considering the strong heritage of the town centre the site would have to try a lot harder to engage with the narrative of the historic High Street.



SECTION 02

Approach

The Brief - Overview & Areas

What Makes a Good Theatre?

What Makes a Good Office?

Conceptual Relationships for the Uses

Conceptual Approach to Each Site

Concept Summary

APPROACH

BRIEF: OVERVIEW & AREAS

Subsequent to the initial study, Falkirk council confirmed two options were to be developed over two sites.

Option A sees a separation of the HQ office to the municipal site and with the remaining Theatre, Studios (inc Members Chamber), Central Hub and Library located at the High St / Cockburn site. The HQ is perceived as an “office only” building and the “democratic” committee space remains in the Arts Centre given its infrequent use by the council. As a result, the space created can effectively be suited.

Option B amalgamates both the Arts Centres (Theatre, Studios, Chamber and Hub facility) as well as the office HQ at the High St/ Cockburn Site.

It is recommended that this one shared building solution offers efficiencies and is cost effective but the Option A was reviewed in order to understand the cost, site and space requirements

ARTS CENTRE

The arts centre component, as a replacement for Falkirk Town Hall will not be on a like-for-like replacement but will be a new and distinct cultural offer which contributes to the cultural regeneration of Falkirk’s town centre and the wider area. The current Town Hall is compromised by the lack of a range of spaces smaller than the main house and suited to different uses. This constraint impacts both the provision of arts, culture and community development activity, and the commercial potential to exploit the conference and meeting market which is increasingly important to the economics of these venues.

Significant new capacity for programme and earning could be created in a new venue by providing a large studio space into which many smaller events could be programmed, freeing up the main house for more appropriate and profitable programmes.

Participative dance is a very important artform locally and nationally among young people as well as for older ‘ballroom’ participants. There is a strong case for a dance studio. This would be a space different in character and fit out to the main studio – white walled rather than black, with a good quality sprung timber floor and without regular use for audience seating.

Finally, a key part of the development will be to provide a series of purpose-designed but highly flexible activity/meeting and learning spaces which could be programmed for various community events and council chamber related activities.

MIXED AND SHARED USE

To further compliment the mix of uses in the new centre there is a case for numerous flexible spaces supporting learning, visual arts, civic functions and gathering. As well as having dedicated spaces for each there is also the opportunity to invigorate the generous public spaces between.

Arts Centre day-round programmes will best drive town centre use, retail benefit and regeneration, but will need to offer wider town centre visitors reasons to come in and out throughout the day and week. In part this will be driven by the kinds of facilities and uses for smaller group activity discussed above, but it will need to be supported by significant (non-restaurant) food and beverage offer. Across the new centre, bars to serve primarily show and hire audiences, and a significant café/bistro offer will both generate net income, but will also ensure that the centre is a natural place for people to gather and socialise, at the heart of the town.

In addition there is opportunity to create a new public library and central hub. A major driver behind this idea is the desire for the building to contribute to the life of the town during the day as well as in the evening. A public facility such as a library with central hub facilities – typically open when theatres are not – may be seen as ideal in this regard. However, it must be remembered that the activities a library houses – study, learning and providing a service – are intrinsically different to those contained within a theatre foyer. If a success is to be made of this combination then, looking at it from the point of view of the theatre, a way must be found for the library to form the kernel of that idea which is to disengage the audience from the struggles of daily life.

OFFICE

There are four key components of the new office HQ: Democratic Functions, Council HQ Function, Back Office Functions and External Partners. By creating a stand-alone development there is opportunity to enhance the image of the HQ with a significant public realm and ample area for parking.

The new offices should have well proportioned spaces, utilising optimum floor plate sizes, contiguity and a modern services infrastructure all contributing to improved flexibility which in turn has a positive effect on efficient space use, but, more importantly, the opportunity for ongoing organisational change.

Good quality and flexible workspace with improved interaction and communication should contribute directly to the effectiveness of an organisation With respect to co location however and the particular characteristics of large organisations, a major benefit should come in the breakdown of directorate and departmental silos and the e continued evolution of new working practices.

Improved well-being has been shown to have a direct impact on staff retention and performance and as such the new office will look to maximise these effects with provision of good daylighting levels, access to active travel facilities and direct views to the outside for all occupants. Locating within the town centre will provide convenient access for staff and visitors to different amenities, generally to be seen in terms of easy walking distance, including include shops, eateries, library and other entertainment venues.

A more efficient building complex will be inherently more sustainable, offering greater flexibility and will result in less significant building change and less energy consumption. As such the new office should meet the criteria set out in the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge which seeks to reduce operational energy, reduce embodied carbon, reduce potable water consumption and improve the health and wellbeing of all occupants.

KEY DESIGN CRITERIA

In Option A the segregation of the Theatre/Hub/Library with the HQ Council office allows for the creation of individual identities more easily. A trip to the theatre should allow people to disengage with daily life which will and as such the arts centre which will also provide space for the council chamber/central Hub and theatre elements to have separate entrances.

Any shared use of public spaces should be managed with care in order to avoid conflict between each use. This may involve the creation of distinct areas separated by level or distance to allow a clear delineation between uses.

Theatres and arts centres have a very demanding set of adjacencies which must be broadly followed if all aspects of the operation are to be safe, effective and efficiently managed. In broad terms, the key principle is one of separation of public and private areas either side of a front of house/back of house line. In addition to this careful consideration of service vehicle access must be considered to allow for the smooth delivery of sets and equipment from HGV’s.

SCHEDULE OF AREAS - OPTION A

550 Seat Theatre / 200 Studio/ No Office / Library (no storage) / Hub

Total Areas	Shared	Arts Centre	Hub	Library
A Total Public Areas	0	1077	0	0
B Total Theatre Auditorium, Stage and Support	0	1,165	0	28
C Total Arts Centre Performer Areas	0	211	0	0
D Total Studios / Creative Spaces / Public Meeting Spaces	0	728	0	0
E Total Arts Centre Staff Rooms and Administration	0	160	12	12
F Total Library	0	0	0	536
G Total Central Hub (no partners)			281	19
H Total Members Zone			0	34
I Total Senior Management Zone			0	0
J Total HQ Building Support Zone			0	5
K Total HQ Work Zone			0	162
Total NET Usable Area	0 m ²	3,341 m ²	293	222
Grossing Rate Theatre & Shared:			15	29
15% Circulation			79	133
10% Technical Theatre Areas	0	501	0	0
15% Plant, Ducts, Risers	0	334	0	0
25% Internal Walls	0	501	0	0
		835	0	0
			79	151
TOTAL GROSS AREA (split)	0 m ²	5,512 m ²	466 m ²	889 m ²
TOTAL GROSS AREA (combined)		5,512 m ²		1,354 m ²

APPROACH
BRIEF: OVERVIEW & AREAS

SCHEDULE OF AREAS - OPTION A

HQ Office with 164 workstations exc Members

Total Areas						
	Shared	Arts Centre Dedicated	HQ/Back	Library		
A Total Shared Public Areas	0	0	294	2.0	0	
B Total Theatre Auditorium, Stage and Support	0	0	0		0	
C Total Arts Centre Performer Areas	0	0	0		0	
D Total Studios / Creative Spaces / Public Meeting Spaces	0	0	155		0	
E Total Arts Centre Staff Rooms and Administration	0	0	0		0	
F Total Library	0	0	0		0	
G Total Central Hub (no partners)			0	0.0		
H Total Members Zone			239	4.0		
I Total Senior Management Zone			257	33.0		
J Total HQ Building Support Zone			405	5.0		
K Total HQ Work Zone			684	120.0		
Total NET Usable Area	0 m ²	0 m ²	2,034	164.0	0 m ²	
Grossing Rate Office & Library:			PLUS MEMBERS			
Grossing Rate Theatre & Shared:			102		0	
15% Circulation			548		0	
10% Technical Theatre Areas	0	0	0		0	
15% Plant, Ducts, Risers	0	0	0		0	
25% Internal Walls	0	0	0		0	
			550		0	
17% Net to Gross Conversion						
TOTAL GROSS AREA (split)	0 m ²	0 m ²	3,234 m ²		0 m ²	
TOTAL GROSS AREA (combined)		0 m ²			3,234 m ²	

SCHEDULE OF AREAS - OPTION B

550 Seat Theatre / Office / Library / Hub

Total Areas					
	Shared	Arts Centre Dedicated	HQ/Back	Library	
A Total Shared Public Areas	530	349	0	2.0	0
B Total Theatre Auditorium, Stage and Support	48	1,084	0		0
C Total Arts Centre Performer Areas	20	191	0		0
D Total Studios / Creative Spaces / Public Meeting Spaces	578	186	0		0
E Total Arts Centre Staff Rooms and Administration	0	152	0		0
F Total Library	0	0	0		536
G Total Central Hub (no partners)			281	19.0	
H Total Members Zone			240	4.0	
I Total Senior Management Zone			277	33.0	
J Total HQ Building Support Zone			425	5.0	
K Total HQ Work Zone			684	115.0	
Total NET Usable Area	1,176 m ²	1,961 m ²	1,907	178.0	536 m ²
Grossing Rate Theatre & Shared:					
15% Circulation			95		27
10% Technical Theatre Areas			514		124
15% Plant, Ducts, Risers			0		0
25% Internal Walls			0		0
			0		0
			515		141
17% Net to Gross Conversion					
TOTAL GROSS AREA (split)	1,823 m ²	3,236 m ²	3,032 m ²		827 m ²
					8,917