

### Contamination

We have received the following feedback from the SI contractors:

*“Having reviewed the chemical results and ground gas/water monitoring results thus far the interim report is as follows.*

*No elevated toxic/phytotoxic contamination was recorded in the shallow soils, however, asbestos was detected (0.013%) at 0.5m depth in TP02 (refer Appendices). From the proposed development layout, this sample location appears to be below an area of proposed hardstanding (car parking/road area). Provided these development proposals do not change – at this preliminary stage – we do not envisage any further remedial action will be required in relation to the asbestos detection (i.e. it was not recorded anywhere else within the site and is below an area of proposed hardstanding).*

*UKWIR analysis has indicated that polyethylene (PE) pipes will be suitable for the proposed development.*

*The ground gas/water monitoring thus far has not indicated any concern related to significant ground gas (methane/carbon dioxide) generation. Carbon dioxide was recorded to range from 0.4 to 2.1% v/v. Methane was recorded as 0.0% v/v for the duration of the monitoring period thus far. There are still another 3 rounds of monitoring to complete, however, so the potential for ground gas issues cannot be discounted.”*

### Coal Mining Risk

*“Based on the published geological information, records relating to past mineral operation and mineral reports which were done in the past, we can anticipate the following information regarding the existing geology and mineral activity in the proposed site:*

*According to published geological information, the superficial deposits in this area are alluvial in nature -clay, silt, salt and gravel- and estimated to be in the order of 35 - 40 metres thick, based on nearby boreholes reports. The solid strata immediately underlying the area belong to the lower part of the Productive Coal Measures and appear to dip generally towards the south-west. The foregoing series of rocks are sedimentary in nature and are represented by cyclic sequences of sandstone, siltstone, fireclay and mudstone, interspersed with seams of coal and ironstone.*

*However, based on the mineral report made in the past, according to the Geological Memoirs of the District published in 1917, no minerals groups appear to be well developed in the central or deepest part of the Falkirk Coalfield.*

*Although The Coal Authority website recommends a mining report to be undertaken for this area, the previous site investigations state that while the seams located at or about the base of the Productive Coal Measures were extensively extracted nearby, no record was found of workings extending under or in close proximity to the site under review. Therefore, it was concluded in a previous site investigation that the underlying minerals are low risk.”*

## 4.0

### Proposal

The introduction of a residential development on a long standing vacant site will be beneficial to the amenity of the neighbourhood as well as increase the security and amiability of the existing pedestrian thoroughfare which currently passes through the inactive, unobserved site.

The proposal is to provide 23 Affordable Housing units with associated car parking and amenity spaces. The units are spread between two 3 storey buildings, Block A occupying the corner location facing onto King Street and Block B located further into the site maximising views over Victoria Park playing field.

The corner of King Street and Thornhill Road has been identified as an opportunity to create architectural focus and strengthen the corner within the urban realm. Corner windows on each floor sit in the prominent position maximising views from inside as well as creating interest externally. A rusty red timber effect cladding has been proposed to surround the corner windows, accentuating it further. The timber effect cladding is also utilised throughout each building to highlight the main entrances and add texture to some of the less fenestrated facades. The remainder of the buildings comprise a mixture of a crisp smooth finish white render contrasted by a dark rough brick, and an equally dark concrete tiled roof. Block B which is positioned further away from existing neighbouring dwellings is 3 storeys high. Block A is 3 storeys high for the majority however the roof height drops slightly over the corner and reduces to 2 storeys where directly adjacent the existing dwellings on King Street.

The balanced mixture of materials intentionally fragments each block, reducing the mass of the buildings, and the colour palette introduces a modern sense to the traditional form, helping to accentuate and rejuvenate the currently tired, unoccupied corner site.

#### Housing Type

The units are to be 100% social rented housing. The flats are designed for general needs provision with the exception of the two ground floor flats in Block A which are wheelchair accessible and one of the ground floor flats in Block B which is ambulant disabled/older person accessible. All flats are designed to comply with Housing for Varying Needs standards.

The proposed accommodation schedule is:

9no. 1 bed flats

13no. 2 bed flats

1no. 2 bed house

Falkirk council has confirmed a high demand for Affordable Housing and this residential site close to the town centre, amenities and transport is the ideal location for a 100% Affordable Housing development.

#### Low Carbon Development

The buildings will benefit from photovoltaic panels integrated into the roofs for generating sustainable electricity and will be constructed to achieve Silver Active Standard in Section 7, Sustainability, of the Scottish Building Regulations.

Sustainable Travel Packs will be provided to residents when they first move into their new home. More information has been provided on this in the Access and Transport section following.

## 5.0

### Access & Transport

#### Location & Local Amenities

This development comprises 100% Affordable Housing. Location is first and foremost the key to providing not only low cost rented housing but low cost living. Affordable housing could potentially become un-affordable if not correctly located within easy access of public transportation and basic services and amenities such as shops, schools, childcare, medical assistance and community recreation spaces.

Public transport is easily accessible, local and larger retail stores are within walking distance, the catchment schools are within walking distance or have a school bus provided, there is a local nursery located within walking distance as is the local medical centre. Residents could happily live within this development without the need of a car & its associated expenses.

Falkirk Travel Plan guidance states that pedestrians will walk approximately 20 minutes and cyclists will travel 30-40 minutes to access jobs and services.

In addition to all of the essential services listed in the table, Victoria Park playing fields, numerous children's playgrounds, basketball courts and public gardens neighbour the site and are easily accessed by potential residents, as is the Thornhill Community Centre.

#### Car Parking Provision

When applying Standard Guidance, Falkirk Transportation Department has advised the need to provide 42 parking spaces for this site:

- 1 space per 1 bedroom flat (9 spaces)
- 2 spaces per each 2 bedroom flat (28 spaces)
- approx. 20% visitor parking (5 spaces)

This requirement is no different to that expected of mainstream housing developments as specified in The National Roads Development Guidance, despite lower car use being anticipated due to income levels.

The National Roads Development Guidance specifies the parking provision for Housing Associations to be 0.2-0.5 spaces per dwelling plus 0.3 spaces visitor parking per dwelling, lower than that specified for mainstream housing. Furthermore, SEStran suggests an even lower rate of 0.5 spaces per any dwelling type whether 1 or 2 bedrooms, given the location of the site.

Based on the town centre location and anticipated car ownership our initial pre-application for car parking was 100% or 23 parking spaces, one per flat in total – as illustrated (adjacent image).

A new and separate car park for Thornhill Community Centre providing 16 spaces was also proposed.



Previous site layout with 23 parking spaces

Following discussions with Planning and Transportation, the number of car parking spaces has been substantially increased to 35 spaces in addition to the 16 spaces for Thornhill Community Centre:

- 1 space per 1 bedroom flat (9 spaces)
- 1.5 spaces per 2 bedroom flat (21 spaces)
- approx. 20% visitor parking (5 spaces)

Note that 2 wheelchair spaces are included within the above figures, located close to the rear entrance of Block A which houses the 2 wheelchair accessible flats

As already highlighted, this is an affordable housing development for lower income residents. The provision provided allows for 100% of units to be designated 1 car space and 30% of units to be designated an additional second car space, plus visitor spaces.

There is completely unrestricted on street parking available surrounding the site and in the neighbouring areas on and directly off King Street. A dedicated pull-in parking lane extends down Thornhill Road directly opposite the site.

The proposal for 35 parking spaces falls slightly short of that requested by Transportation. However the town centre location, affordable nature of this development and close proximity to public transport we would hope should allow Falkirk Council to justifiably relax the standard parking guidance and ensure the development of this brownfield site for badly needed social rented housing can proceed.



Current site layout with 35 parking spaces





Unrestricted on-street parking on King Street



Bike rack system



Unrestricted on-street parking on Thornhill Road

### Sustainable Travel and Bus Routes

The Falkirk Council Local Transport Strategy commits to developing an infrastructure to promote active & sustainable travel. The Executive Summary includes the statement that “The Council recognises that whilst the car fulfils an important function for a variety of journey purposes unrestrained growth in car usage cannot be accommodated indefinitely by engineering measures.” It is our understanding that the council's aim is to minimise car use and encourage sustainable travel options both to benefit the environment as well as reduce congestion on the roads.

To support these aspirations and raise awareness of non-car travel options, new residents of this development will be provided with a Sustainable Travel Pack. The pack will include such information as locations of key services & amenities and walking & cycling routes to them, as well as public transport route maps and timetables. This will promote sustainable travel rather than car use.

### Bicycle provision

One bike parking space has been provided per flat, as specified for standard housing in The National Roads Development Guidance. The bike store is within a designated secure internal space accessed from outside with a key. One bike store room is provided within each building block to ensure adequate, easy to access and secure storage.

### Pedestrians

The existing pedestrian thoroughfare through the site from Thornhill Road directly to Victoria Park, as well as the current gravel path skirting the boundary between Victoria Park and the application site are being maintained for public use and will be upgraded with new tarmac surfaces as part of this proposal. The path cutting through the site adjacent the car parking spaces will be raised to provide a 100mm high kerb safeguard between the path and car parking.

### Community Centre & Neighbouring Area

In addition to the 35 parking spaces for the use of residents, there are 16 parking spaces provided solely for the use of the neighbouring community centre, replacing the existing community centre spaces which are currently within the application site. Fourteen of the proposed spaces are within the application site and two are immediately adjacent on Council owned land. All 16 spaces were originally provided within the application site. However, Transportation advised that a 2m wide pathway was required around the community centre and as a result 2 of the spaces had to be moved out with the application site to ensure this can be provided.

The community centre spaces are accessed via the existing community centre car park. We have kept each car park and associated entrances separate to avoid confusion and reduce the possibility of residents using the spaces allocated for the community centre and vice-versa.

Through consultation with planning officers Mandy Brown and Lynn Slavin we are aware of the recent wider development of the area around the community centre. These works involve the upgrade of the Sir John de Graeme fountain and pathways around the centre and Victoria Park. The dedicated car park proposed will complement these works.

The upgrade of the public paths through the site tie in with the recently completed upgrade of surrounding paths and the proposed development of the fountain, which we believe was due to begin in Autumn 2019.

Mandy Brown has also confirmed that they consulted with local councillors and the Roads Department regarding the two proposed options for the fountain area upgrade, both of which can be seen in the diagram below. The majority opted for Option 1, without the 4 parking spaces. This would suggest that there isn't an existing need for additional parking in the area immediately around the community centre as the opportunity to provide more parking was declined.



Proposed Fountain works Option 1 – Remove Parking  
By Ian White Associates Landscape Architects



Proposed Fountain Works Option 2 – Limited Parking  
By Ian White Associates Landscape Architects

### Construction Access

As with all new development, the construction will have a short-term impact on local residents/adjacent uses such as the community centre. To minimise this impact the developer has provided a construction management plan with the application. The community centre car park will be provided in advance of the main works and alternative footpaths through the site will be provided until the new development is complete.

