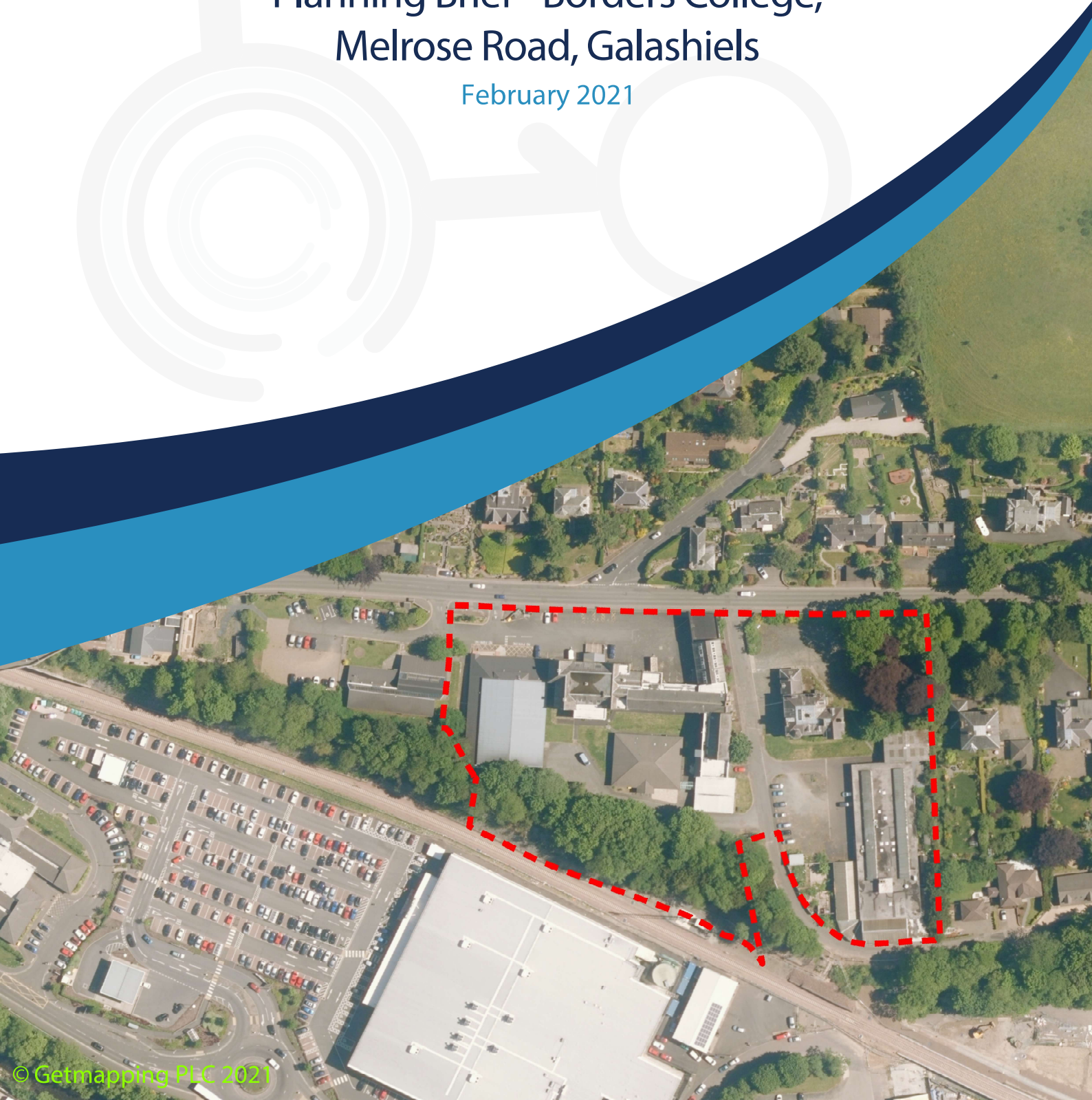


# Scottish Borders Local Development Plan

Supplementary Planning Guidance

## Planning Brief - Borders College, Melrose Road, Galashiels

February 2021



## Contents Page

	Page No.
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Site Context</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Site History</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Policy Context</b>	
4.1 National	6
4.2 Strategic Development Plan	6
4.3 Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016	7
4.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance	7
<b>5. Development Vision</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Development Guidance</b>	
6.1 Energy Efficiency	10
6.2 Parking	10
6.3 Ecology	10
6.4 Waste Management	11
<b>7. Constraints</b>	
7.1 Listed Building	11
7.2 Access	12
7.3 Water, Drainage and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems	13
7.4 Railway	13
7.5 Landscaping	13
<b>8. Developer Contributions</b>	
8.1 Affordable Housing	13
8.2 Education	13
8.3 Waverley Line	13
8.4 Play Areas	13
8.5 Transport	14
<b>Alternative Format/Language Paragraph</b>	<b>15</b>

### List of Figures

Figure 1: Local Context – Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016

Figure 2: Existing Buildings

Figure 3: Redevelopment Plans

### List of Images

Image 1: Front elevation of former Borders College building

Image 2: South facing elevation of Thorniedean House

Image 3: Listed gates of Thorniedean House

Image 4: Entrance to Langhaugh Lane

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This planning brief sets out the main opportunities and constraints relating to the redevelopment opportunity at the former Borders College site, Melrose Road, Galashiels. It is intended to provide a framework for the future development of the site and updates the previous planning brief approved by Scottish Borders Council in 2009.
- 1.2 The brief identifies where detailed attention to specific issues is required and where development contributions will be sought. The brief should be read alongside relevant, national, strategic and local planning guidance, a selection of which are provided within this document.

## **2. Site Context**

- 2.1 Galashiels is located within the Central Scottish Borders, approximately 36 miles south of Edinburgh and is connected via the A7 and the Borders Railway line which opened in 2015 between Edinburgh Waverley and Tweedbank.
- 2.2 The Borders Railway 'Maximising the Impact: A Blueprint for the Future' (November 2014) seeks to ensure economic development opportunities are maximised along the railway corridor. A Masterplan (January 2018) has also been prepared for sites within the centre of Galashiels which seeks to help regenerate the town centre. The new Great Tapestry of Scotland building in Channel Street is currently under construction and is expected to be open in 2021. It is anticipated this will act as a key catalyst in regenerating the town centre.
- 2.2 The site lies immediately east of Galashiels Town Centre. It is located on the south side of Melrose Road (B6374) on an area of generally level ground. Residential properties rise in levelled tiers up the steep slope to the north. The site area has been altered from the original Planning Brief to exclude an office building which lies to the west of the site beyond the Queens Leisure Centre. This building and associated parking to the north west is now occupied and utilised by Live Borders. Whilst this building no longer forms part of the Planning Brief, it is necessary that access to this building is retained and that parking for the existing use is taken into account. The residual site area now available for development is 1.7 Ha (3.95 acres). Figure 1 shows the location of the site within the context of the Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016.
- 2.3 There are a range of different buildings on site. On the western part of the site the dominant property is the two-storey stone built former Galashiels Academy Building, which has been subject to extension and alteration at its eastern extent. This building is not a listed building. To the rear is a single storey modern building currently occupied by a short-term tenant and to the west is the Queens Leisure Centre sports hall operated by Live Borders. On the eastern side of Langhaugh Lane is the Category C Listed Thorniedean House. To the south of this building are the former college 'technical workshops'.



Image 1: Front elevation of former Borders College building

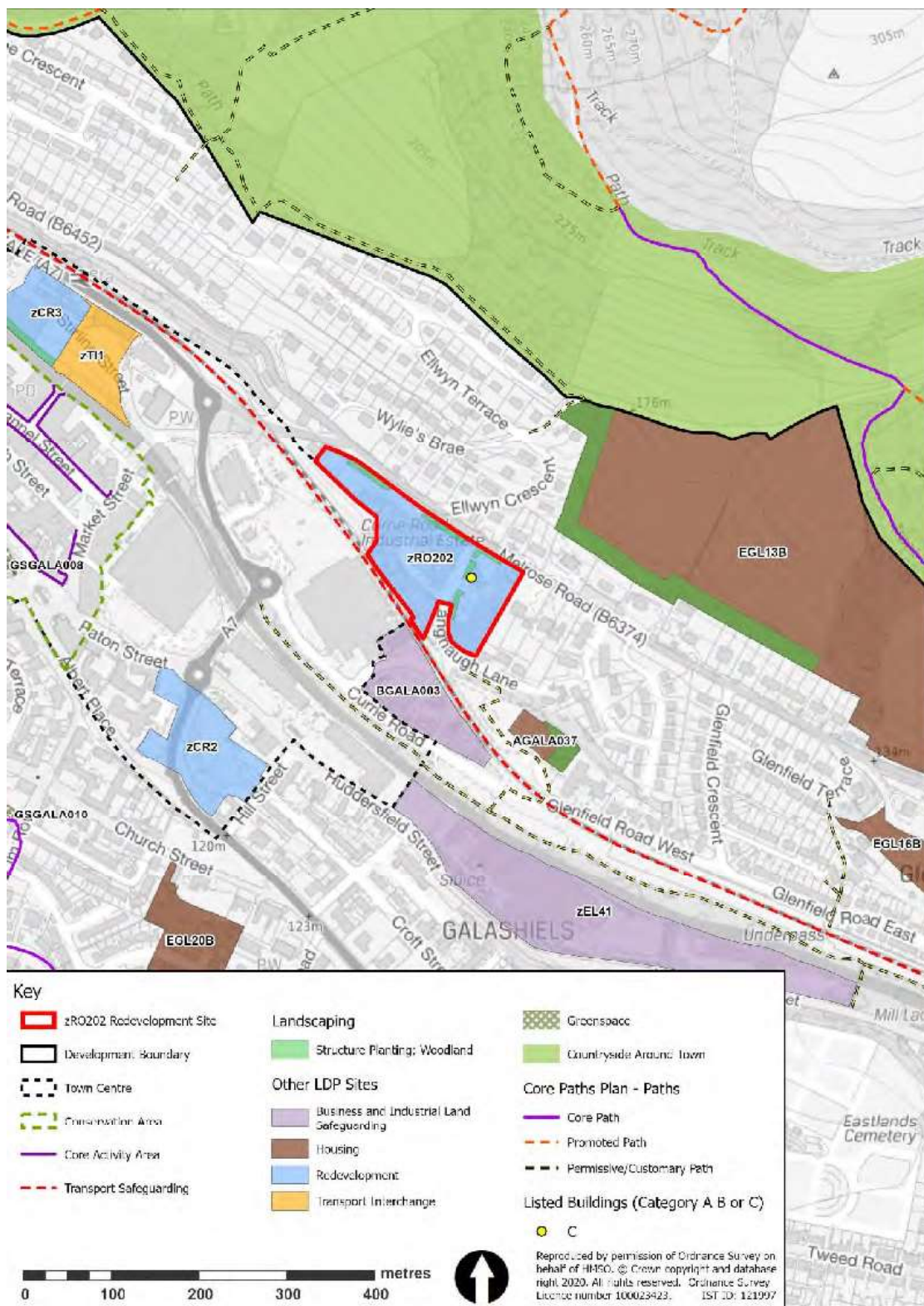


Image 2: South facing elevation of Thorniedean House

- 2.4 Whilst the Queens Leisure Centre building is currently in use, it has been confirmed that it is the intention that a new sports hall will be incorporated within the new Galashiels Community Campus. This would mean that this existing building may become surplus to requirements. This section of the site could therefore become developable in the future and therefore this building is included within this Planning Brief.



Figure 1: Local Context - Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016



- 2.5 There are two access points to the site from Melrose Road, firstly at the western extent of the site in front of the Queens Leisure Centre which is the car park entrance, and Langhaugh Lane which dissects the site providing access to Thorniedean House, the technical workshops and the rear of the main former Academy building, as well as to residential properties to the south east. The nearest bus stop is located at the entrance to the site and has a good town service and is a stopping point for many of the services to other Border towns.
- 2.6 The boundary wall that encloses Thorniedean House to the north and partially to the west also forms part of the Listed Building. The boundary of the site to the south includes a block of woodland on the steeply sloping ground that falls down to the Borders Railway line with Langhaugh Industrial Estate and a supermarket beyond. Figure 2 shows the existing buildings on the site.
- 2.7 The site does not fall within a Conservation Area.

Figure 2: Existing Buildings





### **3. Site History**

- 3.1 The site has predominantly been used for educational purposes, having been built originally for Galashiels Academy in the inter war years. Thereafter the site was used by Galashiels Technical College.
- 3.2 Borders College was formed in 1984 by the amalgamation of Galashiels Technical College, Henderson Technical College (Hawick), Duns Agricultural Centre and the Agricultural Centre, Newtown St. Boswells and the site was used by Borders College until their move to a new purpose-built campus in Galashiels in 2009.
- 3.3 Thorniedean House was built in approximately 1868 as a residential villa for William Sime of Sime & Sanderson, the original owners of Botany Mill in Galashiels. During the Second World War the house was used by a girl's school that was evacuated from Edinburgh. Thorniedean House became part of Galashiels Academy thereafter in 1949 and has been used for educational purposes to date, albeit between 1975 and 1984 it was used by the Council's Assessors.

### **4. Policy context**

#### **4.1 National**

The National Planning Framework 3 is the Central Government's spatial framework which guides development in Scotland in accordance with the Government's economic strategy.

Scottish Planning Policy (2014) provides Government Planning Policy for development management and plan-making purposes.

Designing Streets provides a Scottish Government policy statement on street design and moves towards a place-making approach rather than a vehicular dominated design approach.

The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) is a policy statement for decision making for the whole of the historic environment. Historic Environment Scotland also provide a series of guidance notes which would be relevant to the listed building on the site, Thorniedean House.

#### **4.2 Strategic Development Plan**

The South-East Scotland Strategic Development Plan (SESplan) (SDP) was approved by Scottish Ministers in 2013. The proposed SDP which was intended to replace SDP 2013 was rejected by Scottish Ministers on 16th May 2019. The reasons cited were the Ministers were not satisfied that the Plan was informed by an adequate and timely Transport Appraisal and did not take account of the relationship between land use and transport. Queens Counsel (QC) opinion was sought by SESPlan authorities as to how this matter should be addressed. QC advice was that, whilst out of date, SDP 2013 remains the approved SDP and must therefore continue to be referred to. However, QC advice also stated that whilst the proposed SDP was rejected there are elements of the supporting technical papers and documents which helped guide the proposed SDP and incorporate more up to date positions. Consequently these should be considered as material considerations which include the following:



- a) The policies of proposed SESplan2 with the exception of those policies relating to transport infrastructure
- b) The supporting material prepared in respect of SESplan2
- c) Housing Need and Demand Assessment
- d) General Register Office predictions on population growth
- e) Housing Land Audits
- f) The material contained within the Reporter's examination report

#### 4.3 Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016

The site is identified as a redevelopment site (zRO202) within the Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016. The following policies are relevant to the development of the site:

- PMD2 – Quality Standards
- PMD3 – Land Use Allocations
- PMD5 – Infill Development
- ED2 – Employment Uses outwith Business and Industrial Land
- ED5 - Regeneration
- HD1 – Affordable and Special Needs Housing
- HD3 – Protection of Residential Amenity
- EP7 – Listed Buildings
- EP1 – International Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species
- EP2 – National Nature Conservation and Protected Species
- EP3 – Local Biodiversity
- EP13 – Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- IS2 – Developer Contributions
- IS3 – Developer Contributions Related to the Borders Railway
- IS7 – Parking Provision and Standards
- IS9 – Waste Water Treatment Standards and Sustainable Urban Drainage

#### 4.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

In addition, the following SPGs/SGs would be relevant:

- Affordable Housing
- Biodiversity
- Development Contributions
- Green Space
- Landscape and Development
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Placemaking and Design
- Privacy and Sunlight
- Renewable Energy
- Replacement Windows and Doors
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
- Trees and Development
- Waste Management

## 5. Development Vision

This is an exciting opportunity to provide a new use for the former Galashiels Academy site, the listed Thorniedean House and the former College Campus. The previous planning brief envisaged that the site would be redeveloped for residential uses, which remains the most preferable use in planning terms however alternative uses will be considered on their own merits provided they do not conflict with the established land use of the area and do not compromise the vitality and viability of the town centre. Since the original planning brief was produced in 2009 there has been no long-term use secured for the buildings on the site and their condition has deteriorated.

5.1 The key requirements of the redevelopment are as follows:

### Site A

1. Retention of Thorniedean House and listed features of the property
2. Conversion and subdivision of Thorniedean House or being retained as a single property
3. Existing trees and woodland to be retained, as they make a valuable contribution to the amenity of the local and wider townscape. Tree removal(s) will only be considered if informed by a tree survey and under exceptional circumstances. The Council has recently declared a climate emergency and it is recognised that trees play an important role in countering climate change
4. Creation of attractive open space setting for the Listed Building
5. Retention and enhancement of stone boundaries along the northern boundary facing Melrose Road
6. Location of parking to be sympathetic to the character and setting of the listed building

### Site B & C

1. Housing in site B should be no higher than 2 storeys
2. Housing in site C should be no higher than 2 storeys and fully consider any potential issues with overshadowing from existing trees
3. Retention and enhancement of the private Langhaugh Lane to ensure access to existing residential properties
4. Parking must be sympathetic to the character and setting of Thorniedean House

### Site D

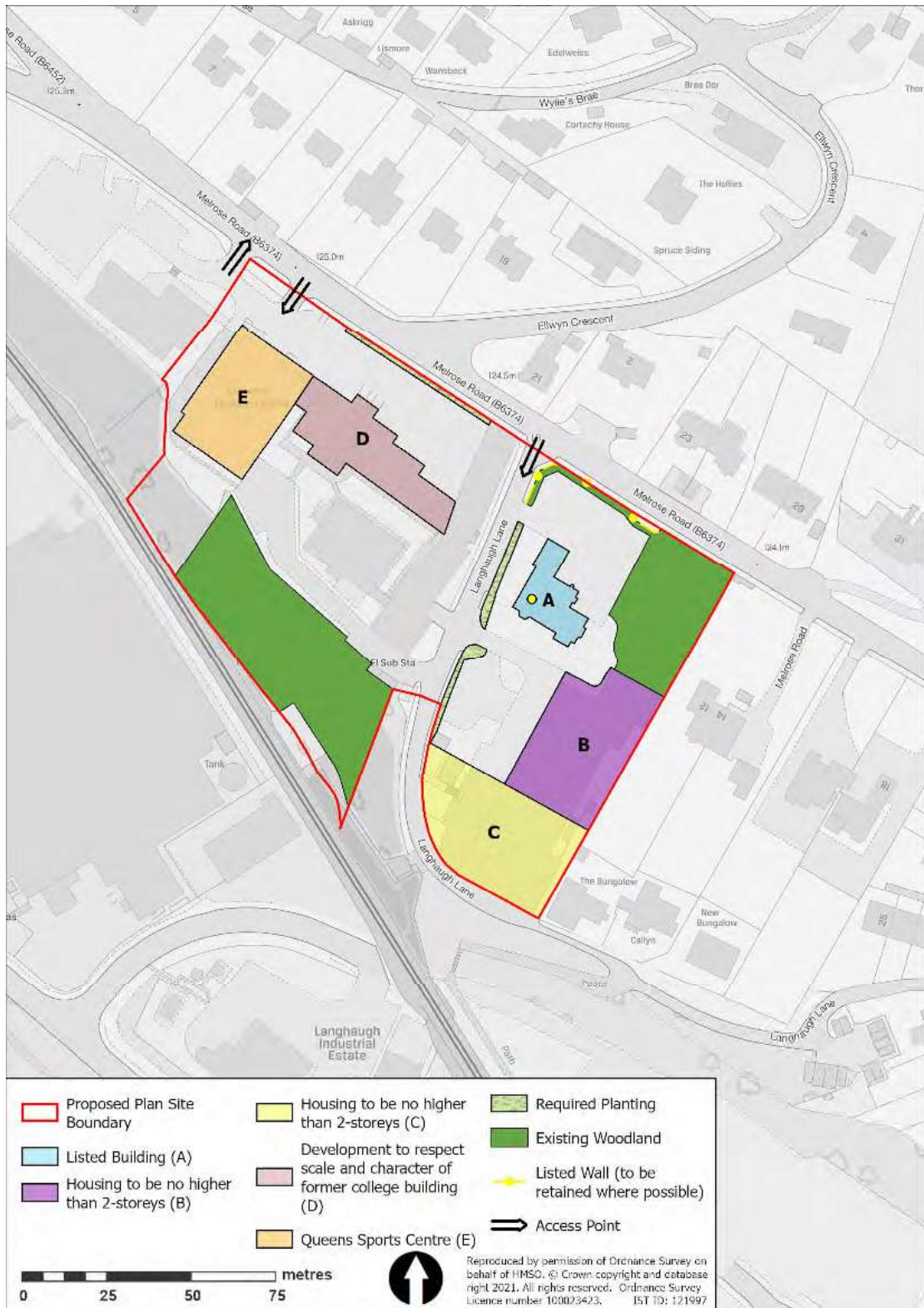
1. It is not necessary to retain the existing former college building as it is not Listed nor does it sit within a conservation area, and therefore planning consent is not required for its demolition
2. New build should reflect the scale and character of the existing former college building
3. Woodland to the rear of Site D should be retained

### Site E

1. Should the Queens Leisure Centre become available, there is the opportunity to develop this part of the site. Any development must reflect the scale and character of the adjacent former College and must not conflict with adjoining uses

Overall the redevelopment proposals must have regard to 'Designing Streets' and the Council's 'Placemaking and Design Supplementary Planning Guidance'. Figure 3 shows the redevelopment plan.

**Figure 3: Redevelopment Plan**



## 6. Development Guidance

### 6.1 Energy efficiency

The development will be expected to comply with all relevant national policy to reduce carbon emissions from development, to achieve high standards of energy conservation and to provide on-site renewable energy production where appropriate. These provisions are highlighted in Policy PMD2: Quality Standards of the LDP 2016 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Renewable Energy. Developers must comply with these policies and provide evidence of how they have addressed them. On site generation should be incorporated into the development wherever possible as well as sustainable building construction and design.

### 6.2 Parking

Parking should be provided in line with the relevant standards outlined in the SEStrans Parking Guide. This site would be defined as Zone C and appropriate levels should be calculated on this basis. Appropriate cycle parking should also be provided in line with Cycling by Design. In general, if housing was to be the future use for the site, the parking levels should ideally be in line with the Transportation Standards section within the Local Development Plan 2016 i.e.:-

- 2 spaces in curtilage per property plus 25% visitor parking
- 1 space in curtilage per property plus 100% visitor parking
- 175% communal parking evenly distributed throughout the site
- Or a suitable combination of the above.

### 6.3 Ecology

#### Ecology and habitat

A preliminary ecological appraisal will be required to inform a proportionate Ecological Impact Assessment in accordance with good practice<sup>1,2</sup>. Ecological interest is likely to include bats (European Protected Species) and breeding birds. Opportunities to enhance the biodiversity interest of the site include planting native tree species, creating wildflower areas and provision of bat bricks or bat boxes and bird nest boxes including swift bricks/boxes as appropriate, to enhance the local ecological network.

Further information on the Councils bat survey guidelines can be found at:

[https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/2960/bats\\_technical\\_advice\\_note](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/2960/bats_technical_advice_note)

<sup>1</sup>CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Second edition. Latest version can be found at [https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/2960/bats\\_technical\\_advice\\_note](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/2960/bats_technical_advice_note)

<sup>2</sup>CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Latest version can be found at: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/>



## 6.4 Waste Management

Waste management facilities for recycling and collection should form an integral part of the development, further guidance is provided within Scottish Borders Council's Supplementary Guidance on Waste Management.

## 7. Constraints

### 7.1 Listed Building

Thorniedean House, located at the eastern end of the site, is a Category C Listed Building. Historic Environment Scotland's 'list description' associated with the building can be viewed here: <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB50710>. It should be noted that both the interior and exterior are listed, and that in particular the boundary walls, railings and gate piers are also specifically included in the listing.



Image 3: Listed gates of Thorniedean House

There are opportunities to consider extending the existing building (to the rear or north side). The site could accommodate some low height new building to the rear, perhaps in the form of a 'lodge' or 'stables' building which are subservient to the main house.

Redevelopment proposals for the listed building, including alterations or extension, will be assessed taking account of the advice contained in the following documents from Historic Environment Scotland:

- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS)
- Historic Environment Scotland's 'Interim Guidance on the Principles of Listed Building Consent'

It should be noted that there is a presumption in favour of retention of the property. It is recommended that pre-application discussion is undertaken with the Planning Authority in connection with the proposals for the redevelopment of this property.

## 7.2 Access

Ideally the development should be served via a single access off Langhaugh Lane with the current openings onto Melrose Road, adjacent to the Queens Centre, being closed off to vehicles. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m (minimum) would be required at the junction of Melrose Road and Langhaugh Lane and this may require some adjustments to the existing boundary walls on both sides though it is noted this junction has been used by the College and residents for some time. Provision of the appropriate sightlines will need to take cognisance of the Listed status of the boundary walls, gate piers and railings of Thorniedean House. In order to provide the requisite sightlines stone walls would need to be rebuilt. In an effort to provide desired connectivity, consideration should also be given to a secondary access onto Melrose Road, however this would be dependent on the site layout and density.



Image 4: Entrance to Langhaugh Lane

Consideration may also be given to amalgamating the existing access, egress and Langhaugh Lane junction in to one single junction depending on site use and layout proposals. It is likely that the existing access serving Live Borders offices will have to be amended to allow two way traffic if not incorporated into any revised access on to Melrose Road.

Langhaugh Lane which currently dissects the site is a private road which would require to be upgraded to an adoptable standard as part of the redevelopment. This will include the need for appropriate surfacing, lighting and drainage. Depending on the level of development, it is unlikely that a Transport Assessment will be required. A Transport Statement will however be required outlining the proposed traffic (including pedestrian) movements that will be generated by any development.

The street layout should take on board the principles of Designing Streets which encourages innovative street design, with well-connected layouts where the car is less dominant. Traffic calming should be “designed in”.

Improvements will be required to the pedestrian link from the site southwards towards Currie Road. Pedestrian links to the town centre must be retained and enhanced.

### **7.3 Water, Drainage and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems**

There are no surface watercourses within the site and the nearest watercourse, the Gala Water, lies to the south. A Drainage Impact Assessment will be required at the planning application stage together with an assessment of water capacity. Early work on these matters in conjunction with Scottish Water is encouraged as is any change to existing infrastructure. Sewerage disposal should be connected to the public foul sewer. Developers may be required to fund works that mitigate the impact on existing networks. Provision for Sustainable Urban Drainage which accords with the design principles of Sewers for Scotland should be applied.

### **7.4 Railway**

Network Rail would require to be consulted during the process of any planning application for development within 10 metres of the railway line. Any noise impacts resulting from the proximity of the railway line must be considered.

### **7.5 Landscaping**

Existing mature trees are present within the site, both to the east of Thorniedean House and to the south of the former college. Mature trees should be retained in accordance with LDP Policy EP13 – Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows and the Council's Trees and Development SPG. A tree survey will require to be produced to ensure the long-term viability of the trees on the site.

## **8. Developer Contributions**

### **8.1 Affordable Housing**

The site is located in the Central Borders Housing Market Area in which on-site affordable housing provision is sought at a rate of 25% for residential units for development of 17 units and above. The Council's SPG on Affordable Housing sets out the methods for delivery of on-site affordable housing.

### **8.2 Education**

Developer contributions will be required towards Galashiels Academy and Langlee Primary School in line with the Council's Development Contributions SPG at the time of a planning application. Contributions are not required for one-bedroom properties or housing that meets the terms of the Council's affordable housing guidance.

### **8.3 Waverley Line**

Contributions towards the reinstatement of the Waverley Railway Line are required in line with the Council's Development Contributions SPG at the time of a planning application. Affordable housing units do not require to make these contributions.

### **8.4 Play areas**

It is expected that development contributions would be required towards off-site play provision for an existing facility within walking distance of the site. This would be in line with the Council's Green Space and Development Contributions SPGs at the time of a planning application. This would be sought for a development of two bedroomed units and above.

## **8.5 Transport**

Transport contributions shall be required in respect of any works identified in the Transport Statement.



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