

THE OLD TOWN HALL & CORN EXCHANGE

OLD TOWN
SWINDON

PLANNING BRIEF

NOVEMBER 2013



Foreword

This Planning Brief was approved by the Borough Council's Planning Committee for Development Management Purposes on the 12th November 2013, following an eight week public consultation in August and September 2013.

The Brief provides a policy and design framework to guide and deliver high quality redevelopment of the site incorporating the renovation and re-use of the Old Town and Corn Exchange listed buildings.

All future planning applications will be considered against the background of the Planning Brief.



Front Cover Images

[left] Partial front view of Town Hall & Corn Exchange

[right] Illustrative Scheme by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

Oblique frontal view of Town Hall & Corn Exchange Tower

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Purpose of the Brief	4
3	Community Participation & Stakeholder Involvement	5
4	Vision Statement	6
5	The Site and its Context	7
6	Historical Context & Analysis	8
7	Policy Context	13
8	Planning History	15
9	Site Appraisal	16
10	Design Considerations	20
11	Land Uses	28
12	Transportation, Access & Parking	29
13	Services	29
14	Development, Viability & Land Assembly Issues	29
15	Appendices	31
	i. Formal Description of Listed Buildings.	
	ii. South West Design Review Panel Letters.	
16	Evidence Base	37
	i. Swindon Old Town and Corn Exchange Heritage Assessment, Dec 2012, Oxford City Council Heritage and Specialist Services.	
	ii. Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange, South West Design Review Panel Presentation, Nov 2012, Illman Young Associates.	
	iii. Swindon Old Town Hall & Corn Exchange, Illustrative Sketch Scheme - March 2013 [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios]	

Illustrations

Fig 1: Core Site Diagram (Illman Young Associates)

Fig 2: Historic Area Assessment - Spaces (Oxford City Council / Illman Young Assoc.)

Fig 3: Historic Area Assessment - Core Area Notes (Oxford City Council / Illman Young Assoc.)

Fig 4: Issues, Constraints and Considerations (Illman Young Associates)

Fig 5: Illustrative Scheme - Visualisation Aerial View NW [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios]

Fig 6: Illustrative Market Square and Head of Square Building [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios]

Fig 7: Illustrative Scheme - Corn Exchange [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios]

Fig 8: Illustrative Scheme - Newport Street [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios]

Fig 9: Illustrative Scheme - Site Plan [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios]

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Swindon Borough Council has produced this Planning Brief to help inform decisions about the future of the site. It has adopted a collaborative approach with Forward Swindon Limited, English Heritage and prospective developer, Swindon Corn Exchange Limited.
- 1.2. Swindon Corn Exchange Limited has appointed a number of consultants to provide advice and develop options for the site. Contributions to this brief have been made by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studio Architects, Illman Young Landscape Design, Melo Associates and Oxford City Council Heritage Team.
- 1.3. The Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange buildings locally referred to as “The Locarno” and the surrounding car parking areas is a strategically important site in Old Town, Swindon.
- 1.4. Located on the edge of the retail and civic core of Old Town, the site presents an exciting opportunity for a high quality development that includes the careful restoration and reuse of the listed buildings.
- 1.5. The brief sets out the Council’s aspirations for this site and provides guidance to prospective architects and developers on urban design principles, massing, preferred activity, access and the requirement for development to preserve the character of the listed buildings and their setting.
- 1.6. The brief outlines the various policies which relate to the site and justify the requirements to be placed on any developer.
- 1.7. It describes the site and its context, highlights constraints and opportunities, and outlines the overall approach and vision that the Borough Council considers is needed to ensure the successful development of the site.
- 1.8. This brief represents a re-appraisal of the Council’s policy for the site due to changed economic circumstances, the removal of the need for a Registry Office in this location, and because the Council believes the scale of previous proposals may have an adverse and unacceptable impact.
- 1.9. It is anticipated that to deliver a viable development other adjacent buildings will need to be included in the scheme. These include The Forum, currently occupied by HSBC Bank (first floor), and the Mason’s Lodge and associated car park areas. The development is seen as a catalyst for change in Old Town with the potential for other vacant or poor quality buildings to form part of a broader regeneration.
- 1.10. The redevelopment of the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange with a high quality scheme has the potential to act as a catalyst for regeneration of the wider area, particularly the links from this site along High Street. Such improvements to the wider area would in turn support the sustainability of high quality uses within the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange itself and therefore are to be welcomed. These improvements could include the refurbishment of existing buildings on High Street to a similar level of design quality as required through this brief for the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange, or selective demolition and new build; improvements to the public realm including measures to encourage greater pedestrian flows along High Street. Uses complementary to those within the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange and in keeping with the existing retail, commercial and leisure uses predominance would act to help sustain the successful regeneration of the site(s). All new redevelopment opportunities and refurbishment of existing buildings, in the wider Old Town area should respect the historic context appraisal that informs this Brief and be of the highest design standards to compliment the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange proposals.
- 1.11. This Planning Brief is a positive step to encourage and guide a design that responds well to its context and which will assist in the earliest possible redevelopment of this important site. The Brief is a positive step to encourage and guide a design that responds well to its context and which will assist in the earliest possible redevelopment of this important site.

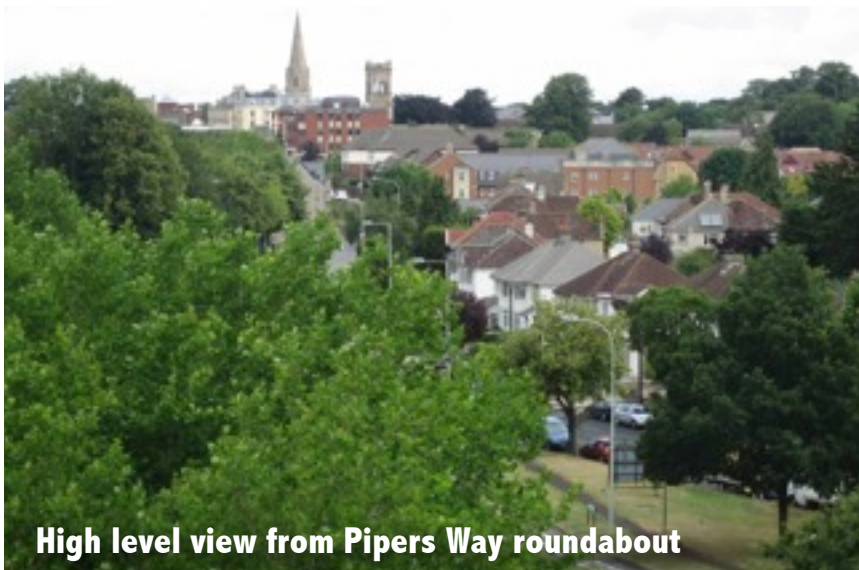
2. Purpose of the Brief

- 2.1. The brief sets out information on the key issues of heritage, urban design, public realm, vehicular access and car parking. In addition it establishes the principles for appropriate built form in terms of the overall site arrangement, its scale and preferred massing.
- 2.2. The brief reflects the potential that the site has for regeneration as a mixed use development. The site offers the opportunity for private sector-led investment, in partnership with the Council, to develop a distinctive scheme making beneficial use of the listed buildings. It also offers the opportunity to rectify some of the damage resulting from insensitive C20th built form.
- 2.3. The Swindon Corn Exchange Limited scheme (SCEL) illustrated in the brief positively addresses the vision that the Council has for the successful redevelopment of the site. Whilst it is anticipated that this scheme will proceed to implementation, subject to necessary planning and listed building consents, it is possible that alternative schemes may come forward. If so, they will need to address, and meet, the heritage, design and development requirements of the brief.
- 2.4. Whether it is the SCEL scheme, or an alternative scheme that proceeds, there will be a need to carefully reference and justify the design against the background of the brief and supporting heritage and townscape assessments. It will be important to demonstrate how the proposal satisfies the brief's objectives and design principles including the retention of important fabric and spaces, the sensitive and complementary interfacing of new build with the listed buildings, and a carefully considered regime of massing and built form which respects the historic significance of the site and surrounding townscape. There must also be an innovative range and disposition of uses which add interest and vitality to the area.
- 2.5. The detailed architectural handling of the buildings and spaces must be of the highest quality.
- 2.6. The Council and English Heritage will expect any prospective developer to engage in early, and detailed, pre and post application discussion to ensure that development proposals carefully and fully meet the expectations for the site. The Council encourages the engagement of the CABE / South West Design Review Panel throughout the design process.
- 2.7. ***This Planning Brief was approved for Development Management Purposes by the Council's Planning Committee on the 12th of November 2013 (Minute 242 refers).***



3. Community Participation & Stakeholder Involvement

- 3.1. This Planning Brief has been subject to public consultation in accordance with the Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 3.2. The consultation period ran for 8 weeks between the 30th July and 24th September 2013. Key stakeholders, including local residents were consulted and a well-attended public exhibition was held in the Devizes Road Art Centre on the 30th and 31st July 2013.
- 3.3. The views of those who completed a questionnaire, or emailed their comments, were overall strongly supportive of the vision, design principles and illustrative scheme. An additional bullet point has been included in the Vision Statement to emphasise the need to protect the reasonable amenities of nearby residents. The brief has also been revised to reflect concerns over car parking provision (Section 12) and a section on the provision of services (Section 13) has been added.



High level view from Pipers Way roundabout

4. Vision Statement

- 4.1. The Vision for the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange establishes the type of development that the Council is seeking and the positive legacy it will set in place.
 - 4.2. The Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange provides a key heritage-led regeneration opportunity for Old Town. Its redevelopment must deliver a high quality development which is respectful of the area's history and character, and exemplary in design quality.
- **The Vision is to restore the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange as the heartbeat of Old Town, a place for people to live and work, to relax and enjoy. It will be a place to appreciate and inspire a more vibrant and sustainable Old Town by;**
 - **Breathing new life into the iconic listed buildings.**
 - **Preserving and enhancing their special qualities.**
 - **Providing the very best setting for the listed buildings.**
 - **Being a regeneration of the highest architectural quality.**
 - **Being a real community asset for the area.**
 - **Being compatible with, and protecting the reasonable amenity of nearby landuses.**
 - **Transforming the Market Square into an attractive pedestrianised square.**
 - **Delivering a well-considered mix of appropriate and sustainable uses.**
 - **Acting as a catalyst for other regeneration schemes in Old Town.**



Illustrative Scheme by FCB Architects

5. The Site and its Context

Location

- 5.1. The core site (see fig 1) is approximately 1.0 hectare in size and is in several ownerships. The central built element comprising the Grade II Listed Buildings of the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange is in private ownership. Swindon Borough Council owns the surrounding car parks of Dammas Lane (the old Market Square) and The Planks. In addition the site looks to incorporate The Forum, located next to the Corn Exchange and Town Hall, together with the Mason's Lodge to the rear of the site situated along the Planks. Both of these buildings are in private ownership. The brief considers that the inclusion of these buildings offers the potential for greater flexibility, a better overall design solution and results in a wider re-development in the area.

Listed Buildings & Conservation Area

- 5.2. The Corn Exchange (formally listed as the Locarno Ballroom and Clock Tower) and the Market Hall and Old Town Hall are mid-nineteenth century buildings and listed as Grade II Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. The formal description of the buildings is set out in Appendix i.
- 5.3. Both buildings are important as local landmarks and for their architectural and historic interest. Their retention and sensitive restoration is required in any redevelopment but due to the extensive damage caused by two major fires the restoration of the internal fabric is not required.
- 5.4. A Heritage and Townscape Assessment, Statement of Conservation Method and Structural Report will be required with the submission of any planning application and listed building application.
- 5.5. Much of the site, including the Listed Buildings and former Market Square are located within the 'Old Town' Conservation Area.

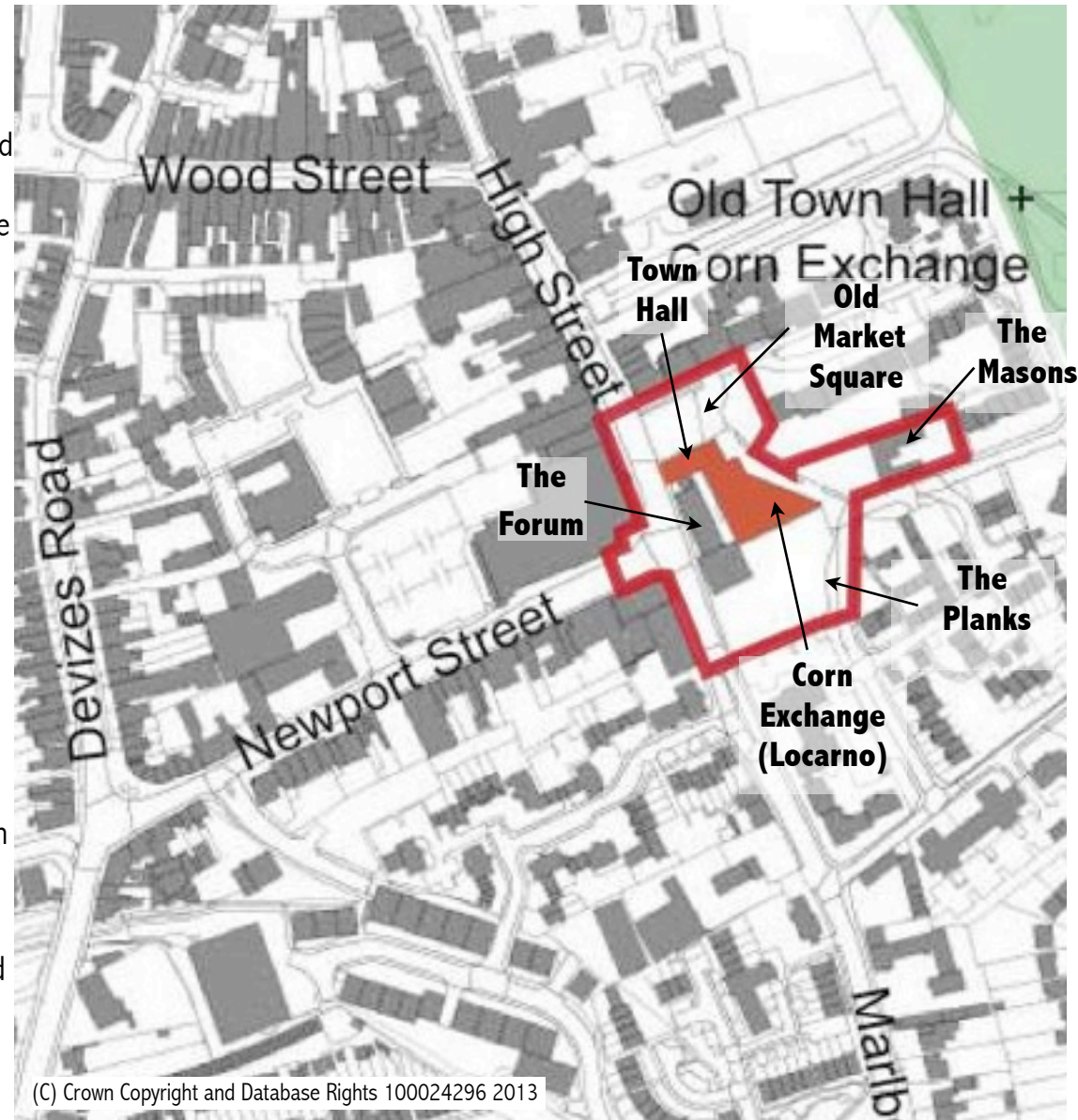


fig 1

Archaeology

- 5.6. An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in respect of part of the site in 2007. A number of Medieval and Post-Medieval features were identified during the evaluation in the northeast part of the site.
- 5.7. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) will require that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during the initial ground disturbance relating to the site stripping, construction of new buildings and any associated landscaping.
- 5.8. The wider area is also archaeologically sensitive. If the re-development area includes the Mason's Lodge site there will be a requirement to carry out a desk top assessment which may identify the need for additional archaeological evaluation and mitigation prior to the determination of a planning application(s).

6. Historical Context & Analysis

- 6.1. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the Heritage Report, which was carried out by Oxford City Council Heritage and Specialist Services in December 2012.

Early History

- 6.2. Old Town has been the site for settlements since Mesolithic times, with evidence of Roman settlements and reference to both Suidune and Suidone appearing in 1086, interpreted as meaning a hill for pigs to roam.
- 6.3. The historic street pattern, still evident today, was established throughout the medieval period, comprising Newport Street, High Street, Wood Street and Devizes Road. A network of lanes to the east and south of the site, including The Planks, Old Mill Lane and Dammas Lane are also medieval in origin. These provided access to the former manor house, mill and Holyrood church.

Economic Development

- 6.4. Markets and trade have been an important part of the development of Old Town and its economy; these have been held from 1259, although growth was slow until the C17th.
- 6.5. The C17th coincided with a period of building and commercial activity, a quarry was established supplying local Purbeck Limestone. In addition the market developed bringing new prosperity and growth.
- 6.6. The construction of the Wiltshire and Berkshire canal (1810) and the North Wilts canal (1819) opened up new communication routes and new trade.
- 6.7. The arrival of the railway on the lower and flatter land outside the town was a catalyst for the development of a 'new' town focussed on the industrial hub of the new Great Western Railway.
- 6.8. For a while the old town market remained popular as a regional centre with the growing population of the new railway town sustaining it and bringing further investment. Shops and houses on the main street were rebuilt and little survives of the earlier periods of the town's growth.
- 6.9. The Goddard Family purchased the Manor in the 16th Century with the estate restricting growth to the east, with expansion occurring to the north and west with some development to the south. Elements of the formal driveway entrance off High Street remain today. The end of the Goddard family line ultimately led to the demolition of the house with the Lawns becoming a public green space.

The Town Hall and Corn Exchange

- 6.10. Plans for a new Town and Market Hall were developed in 1848 and implemented in 1852. In 1866 a new corn exchange and clock tower were added. However, by 1890 the New Swindon Local Board had agreed to build a new town hall and subsequently all civic functions transferred, beginning the demise of the Old Town Hall.
- 6.11. The Old Town Hall originally provided a sack office and store room, with an open arcade onto the market square, later filled in with shop windows. Offices were located above with the public space of the building used for meetings, balls, lectures and readings and acted as the town's polling station.
- 6.12. The market square provided an important civic space for gatherings, fairs and events. The Corn Exchange building included the 80ft clock tower and an adjoining triangular market hall.
- 6.13. Following the loss of civic functions the buildings had a variety of uses; the Corn Exchange hall became a theatre by 1880; later a skating rink and then the Rink Cinema in 1919. In 1949 it was refurbished and renamed the Locarno Dance Hall and used as an entertainment venue throughout the fifties and sixties. Markets and fun fairs continued in the square until 1965.
- 6.14. The buildings were damaged by fires in 2003 and 2004 resulting in their current condition.

Contextual Study

(Refer to figures 2&3)

- 6.15. The hierarchy of routes results from the town's medieval origins. The single greatest impact on the integrity and the quality of the spaces and buildings within the core development site is rooted in changes during the C20th.

- 6.16. Wood Street has retained its historic character with a strong sense of enclosure and history, despite the noise and traffic. The scale of buildings is two and three storey with a mix of narrow and double plots.
- 6.17. Overall High Street has retained a good sense of historical integrity with several good quality buildings fronting onto this route. The exceptions are buildings from the later C20th which detract from the area. There is a pedestrian desire line between Wood Street and the Planks, with this flow contributing to the positive character, although traffic and highways hamper easy movement across High Street.
- 6.18. To the east of the Town Hall and Corn Exchange is a network of small lanes, boundary walls and associated vegetation, which, together with the backdrop of the Lawns, provide a sense of enclosure and contribute to framing views.
- 6.19. Newport Street has a very different character; the busy junction with High Street is a significant negative element. The overall quality of the street is poor, the result of road widening, traffic signals and the modern supermarket development. The surface car parks, combined with other factors result in a poor quality route with the HSBC building terminating the view to the site.
- 6.20. The built form along Marlborough Road, immediately to the south of the site, comprises buildings that add little to the character of the area with the bulk of the HSBC building blocking views to the tower.
- 6.21. The following two maps (extracts from the Heritage report) illustrate the qualitative characteristics of the immediate and surrounding context.

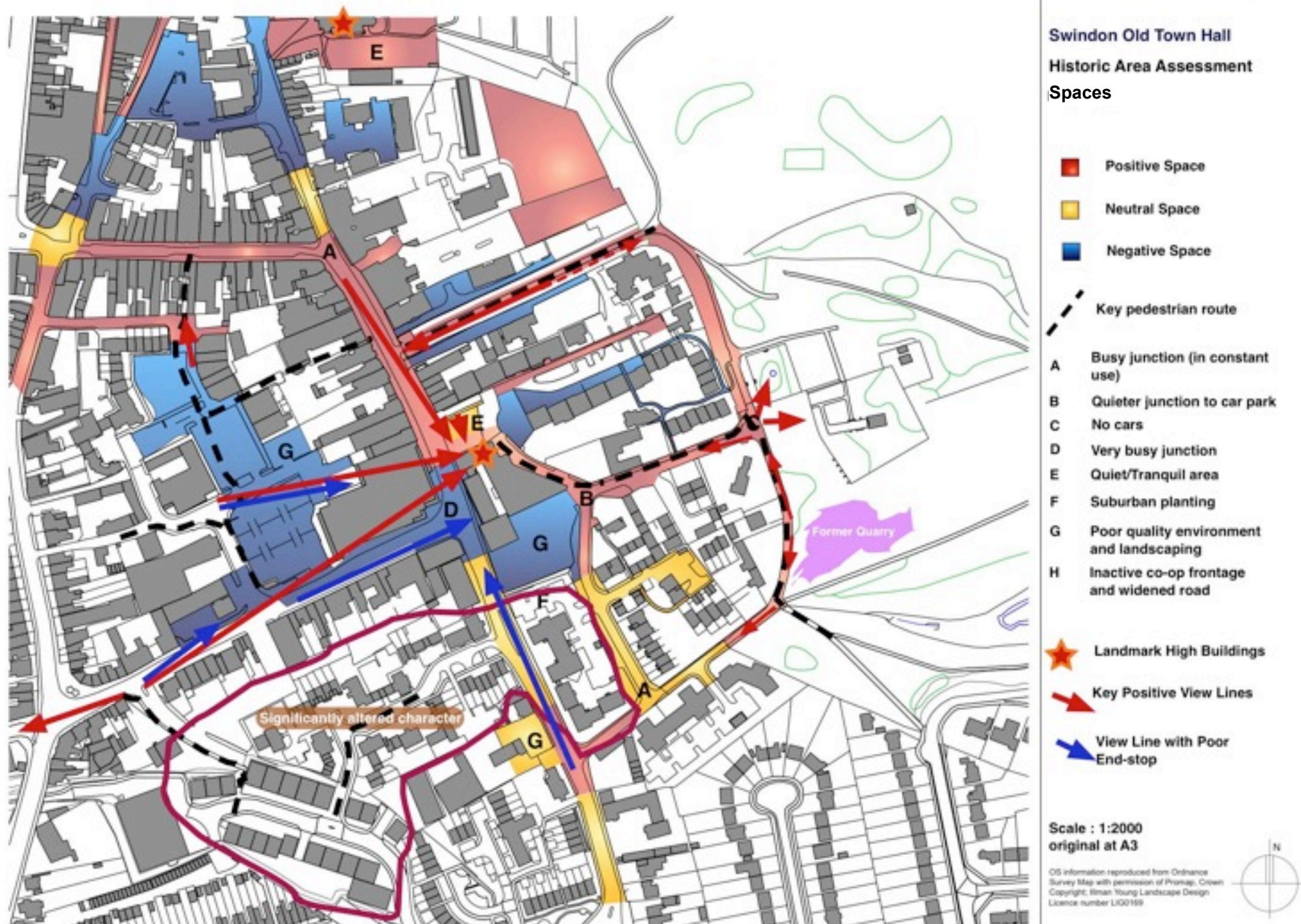


fig 2

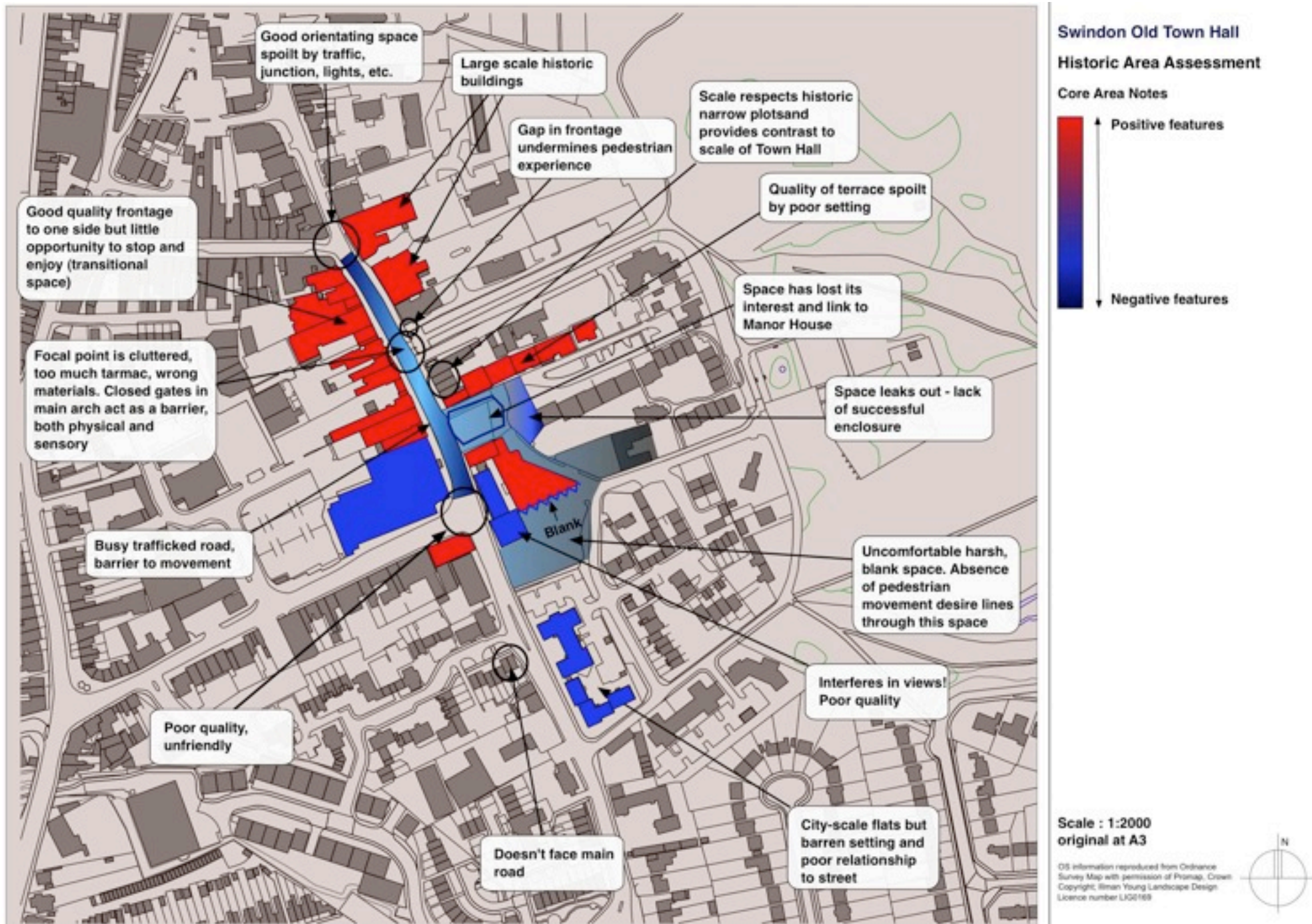


fig 3

Heritage Significance and Conservation Principles

6.22. The table below provides a summary of the key heritage considerations together with the conservation principles for the site:

	HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE / CHARACTER	CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES
Views to the Tower	<p>Long distance views of Christchurch and the corn exchange tower exist from the south.</p> <p>Views, such as they are, from the Park.</p> <p>Elsewhere views are fortuitous and changing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to maintain pre-eminence of the views of the spire and tower from the south • Provide new points of interest and add to the palette and variety of built form.
Character	<p>The historic grain survives and is easily legible in some parts.</p> <p>A hierarchy of principal streets, lanes and footpaths connect people and places despite C20th interventions.</p> <p>Mature trees and boundary planting are strong features providing a sense of enclosure making a positive contribution to the area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce permeability and connections with historic routes. • Reinforce the existing hierarchy of streets, lanes and footpaths. • Reinforce locally distinctive boundary treatments. • Resolve barriers to movement. • Use high quality materials in the public realm and in the new development.
Built Form	<p>The town hall and corn exchange represent evidence of the growth and prosperity of the town and its function as a market centre.</p> <p>Relationship to the market place and the survival of the medieval street pattern provide a sense of history.</p> <p>Swindon was and is an important transport hub. The decline in the intended use and their eventual redundancy is an important part of the wider history. The existence of two 'town halls' is unusual.</p> <p>Aesthetic qualities are affected by the buildings' setting and how they are experienced by viewers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore the market square as a public space and setting to the Town hall. • New buildings should be contextual, but contemporary. • The architectural and functional relationship of Town Hall to Market Square should be enhanced. • The relationship of the site and buildings to the Planks and the movement through different spaces should be reinforced. • Resolve barriers to movement.
The Town Hall & Corn Exchange	<p>Architectural interest reflects role as a centre of administration, law and order, and the commercial interests of the town.</p> <p>Architectural significance compromised by the loss of interiors, aesthetic significance compromised by current condition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the existing building envelope recognise the distinct building elements of the listed buildings. • Retain historic fabric where architectural form provides an understanding of the former uses. • New structures to relate to floor levels of listed buildings.

7. Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 7.1. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It requires local authorities to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets such as The Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange that are most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, there should be recognition that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and require conservation in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Local Policy

- 7.2. The new Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 will eventually supersede the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 but until the new plan is adopted, many of the Local Plan 2011 policies remain in force and will continue to be used in the determination of planning applications. The "saved policies" relevant to this site are listed below.

Policy

- DS6** Standards of Design and Amenity
- DS8** Infrastructure Needs Resulting from Development
- ENV1** Development Affecting Conservation Areas
- ENV2** Development Affecting Listed Buildings
- ENV3** Preservation of Buildings of Significant Local Interest
- ENV7** Public Art
- ENV8** Access for All

- H2** Urban Non-Strategic Housing Allocations
- H10** Provision of Affordable Housing in Larger Developments
- H11** Provision for Housing Disabled People in New Housing Developments
- R12** Hotel and Other Serviced Accommodation
- T1** Transport Requirements of Development
- T6** Protection of Existing and Proposed Cycle Network

- 7.3. The Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be consulted prior to any design work.
- 7.4. The key draft policy in the Submission Draft Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 is Policy EN 10 Historic Environment & Heritage Assets.
- Further details of these policies / documents can be found on the Council's website: www.swindon.gov.uk
- 7.5. Prospective developers should also make reference to Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) – Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide¹. This government statement emphasises the need to put heritage assets to an appropriate and viable use and the positive contribution that they make to local character and sense of place.

¹ Still extant at time of writing.

Planning Swindon Together; A Masterplan For Swindon

- 7.6. The Swindon Town Centre Masterplan has been prepared by Forward Swindon to provide a programme of projects to support the implementation of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan (2011). This Masterplan was endorsed by the Council in April 2013 and it supports the Council's Local Development Framework. Old Town is included within the Town Centre Masterplan study area and reference should be made to this document.

English Heritage

- 7.7. English Heritage is a statutory consultee and will play an important role in providing expert advice and guidance to the Council and the prospective developer(s) in respect of this site.

The following documents published by English Heritage are particularly relevant;

- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance.
- Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places.
- The Setting of Historic Assets: English Heritage Guidance.

South West Design Review Panel (SWDRP)

- 7.8. The SWDRP gives independent expert guidance on major developments in the region and works with local authorities and developers to help achieve the highest possible standards in the built environment.
- 7.9. Whilst it is not a part of the statutory planning process, the Council has used this expert panel to provide guidance on key schemes within the Borough and will continue to involve The Panel in reviewing schemes for the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange.

- 7.10. There have been three presentations to the panel to discuss the site and proposals and the feedback letters are included in the Appendices.
- 7.11. The first presentation looked at the aspirations for the area and included a site visit and the panel supported the project aims.
- 7.12. The second panel meeting covered the background research on the potential development site and the resulting sketch masterplan and emerging design proposals of FCB Studio Architects. The presentation received positive feedback from the panel which made a number of helpful suggestions for further consideration with regard to massing and built form.
- 7.13. Following the third panel review in February 2013, the panel's response can be summarised as;
- the collaborative approach to seeking a viable and high quality design solution is commended as a model process,
 - there has been a positive response to the panel's suggestions,
 - the proposed inclusion of the "HSBC Bank" building and the Masonic Hall into the proposal is supported,
 - the hierarchy of spaces with the Market Square being pre-eminent is the right approach
 - the proposed use of the "Corn Exchange" as a covered courtyard, open to the public, is a great concept,
 - the broadening and greening of the pavement along the Marlborough Road frontage is welcomed,
 - the proposed slender tower is acceptable in principle subject to it being beautifully designed,
 - the idea of allowing public access to the Corn Exchange Tower is welcomed,

- whilst the loss of the beech tree is unfortunate, there is a logic to a building being sited at the head of the Market Square – the lower option of 4 stories for this building is favoured,
- there are two concerns with the reviewed scheme; i) the detailing of the proposed podium at the southern end of the scheme is unresolved particularly in relation to the proposed narrow stairs fronting Marlborough Road, and ii) there is a need for more “active frontage” along the ground floor of that part of the development that would replace the HSBC bank building.

7.14. The SWDRP was re-consulted by letter on the 2nd May 2013 (see Appendix ii), explaining how the scheme has been further revised in light of the Panels’ comments. Following these changes (see Appendix ii) it concluded that;

“The Panel hopes the brief will be approved and that the scheme will proceed to the next stage. We are supportive of this scheme which is set to bring substantial public benefit in regenerating this area and bringing the listed buildings on your site back to life.”

7.15. The SWDRP will be consulted on future Planning Applications.

8. Planning History

- 8.1. Planning permission and listed building consent were granted for development on the site in 2008 (S/07/2805 and S/LBC/07/2806 respectively). The applications were submitted by Bach Homes (Locarno) Limited for the construction of 115 flats, a registry office, 3 restaurant/bar units, hotel, car parking and associated public realm works. These permissions elapsed on September 8th 2011.
- 8.2. A further planning application and listed building consent application (S/10/0883 and S/LBC/10/0884), also submitted by Bach Homes (Locarno) Limited, were refused in February 2011. The applications were for similar uses, but in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the revisions would result in unacceptable impact upon the character, setting and appearance of the listed buildings and the Old Town Conservation Area.
- 8.3. The applicant initially sought to appeal these applications but withdrew from the appeals in November 2011 and July 2012.
- 8.4. The withdrawal of the most recent applications and appeals coincided with Bach Homes (Locarno) Limited decision to reappraise options for the site and enter into fresh discussions with the Council to find a viable and appropriate development solution.

9. Site Appraisal

(See issues, constraints and considerations map (fig 4) at end of this chapter).

- 9.1. The site is irregularly shaped with the adjacent road network defining the western extents. Surface car parks comprise the spaces that lie immediately to either side of the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange buildings, with primarily residential development beyond this.
- 9.2. The site marks an important transition along Marlborough Road, signalling a change both in the use and scale of built form and is well located close to the green space of the Lawns.

Constraints mapping

- 9.3. Any proposals need to retain vehicular access along Dammas Lane and the pedestrian link of The Planks.
- 9.4. The site includes the listed buildings, together with a number of other Listed features, such as boundary walls and lies within the Old Town Conservation Area, as illustrated in figure 4.
- 9.5. An existing Beech tree is located at the eastern edge of the Planks car park within the proposed development site. This is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), although it is considered to restrict development potential of the site. Another Beech tree, also subject to a TPO, lies within Beatty Court Gardens and overhangs the site.

Topography

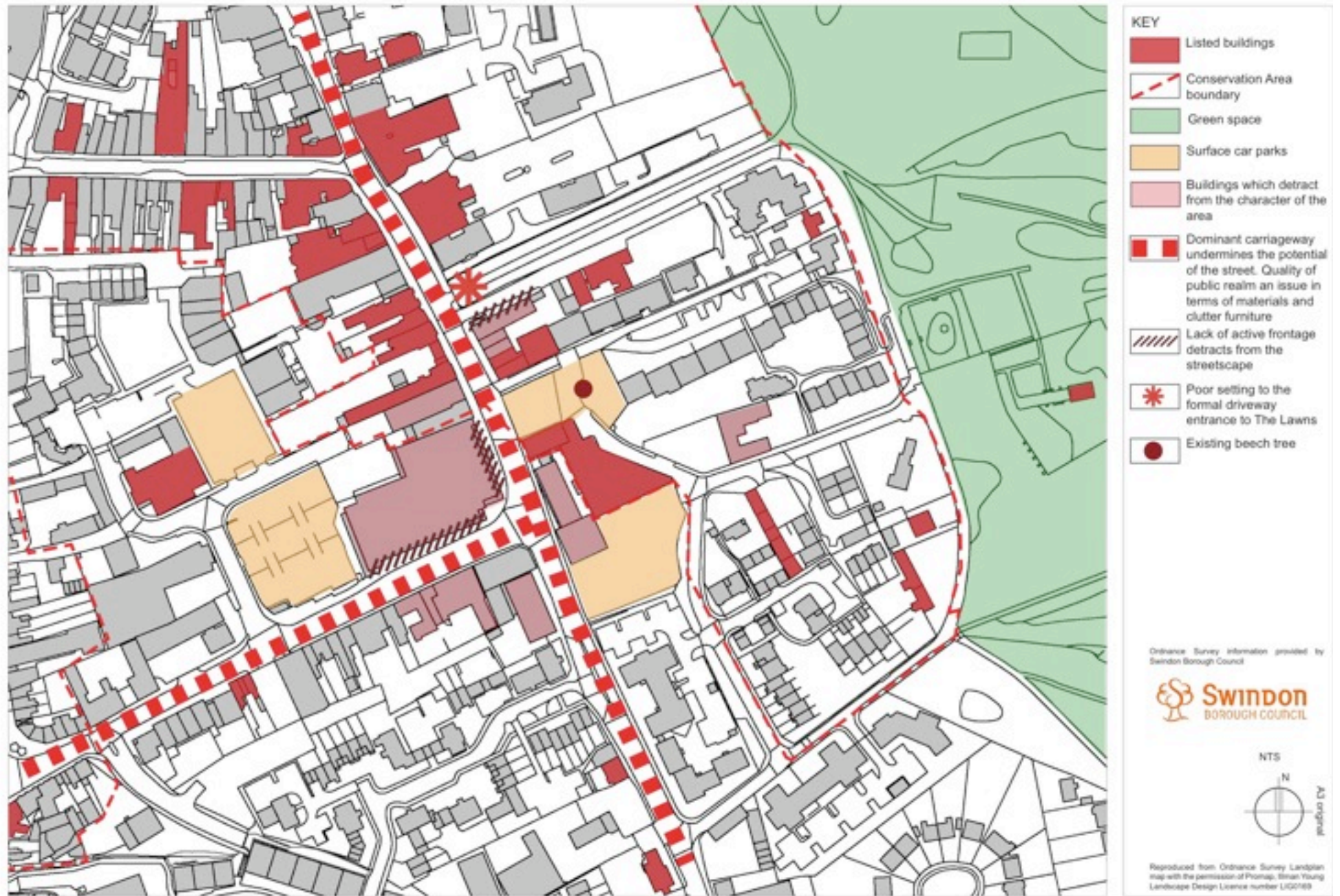
- 9.6. The site is on the same gentle slope as Marlborough Road/High Street, climbing up from the south. The former market square is relatively flat with a steeper gradient towards the site from the Weavers. Northwards, beyond the site the levels continue to climb gradually before sloping sharply downhill again, just beyond Wood Street, towards New Town.

Existing Land Uses

- 9.7. Part of the character and interest of the Old Town area is the diversity of uses and the relationship between these; with residential uses extending along several of the primary routes into Old Town to meet retail, commercial and employment uses.
- 9.8. The current retail and leisure offer comprises a range of shops, restaurants and cafes. High Street has primarily commercial uses with several banks and other businesses. The supermarket opposite the site is a key anchor, although elsewhere there are a number of vacant units.
- 9.9. Wood Street offers a range of independent shops, restaurants and cafes, with mixed use development at Hooper's Place; although car parking dominates the public realm.
- 9.10. Immediately to the east and south of the site are residential areas, comprising a range of styles and scale. The buildings forming the northern edge to the market square provide office space, with other uses in close proximity including the Masonic Hall located off The Planks.

Landscape / Landscape Features

- 9.11. The site itself contains few existing landscape features. External spaces comprise the car parks and within the hoarding line there are a number of self-seeded trees and large stands of buddleia, which require removal.
- 9.12. Adjacent to The Planks car park is a block of shrub planting, together with the TPO beech tree, creating heavy shade, particularly along The Planks.
- 9.13. Significant landscape features in the area lie outside the site boundary such as the adjacent Lawns. The area around the site has an overall 'green' quality due to planting associated with adjacent gardens and boundaries. There is little street tree planting in the area, something which could be explored as part of the new proposals.



OLD TOWN HALL AND CORN EXCHANGE

ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

fig 4

Views and Views Analysis

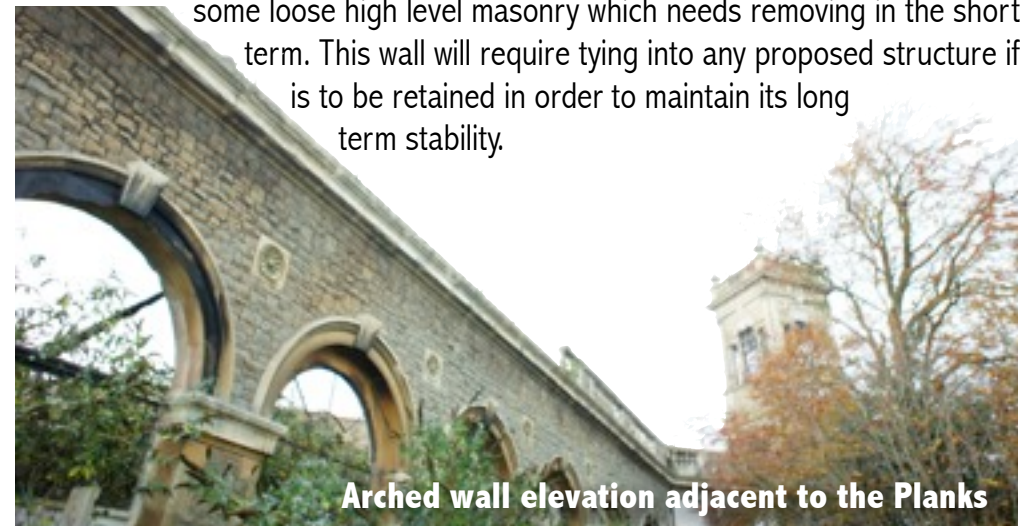
- 9.14. The Corn Exchange clock tower is a distinct architectural feature in Old Town; however, views primarily exist in close proximity to it. The nature and extent of views change as surrounding built form restricts or blocks these.
- 9.15. To the west of the site, such as from the Hooper's Place car park, views to the tower are seen over the High Street roof line and are impacted on by the poor quality setting of the supermarket car park and associated clutter.
- 9.16. Views from the lanes around the site are restricted due to a combination of surrounding built form, topography and in some instances vegetation. Typically it is the more recent buildings which restrict views to the tower, due to their scale and location. It is from the former market square that views to the Town Hall and Corn Exchange can most readily be appreciated.



Existing view from former market square

Structural Condition

- 9.17. The most recent structural survey was conducted by Melo Associates in November 2012. It concluded that there had not been any material change in the structural condition, since earlier surveys, other than weathering of the stone facades and some vegetation growth both inside the site and at the tops of the walls.
- 9.18. The clock tower and associated elevation is in fair structural condition, though there are some local failures of lintels and random cracking. Temporary propping of the bell tower has secured the upper sections and this elevation is generally stable and will remain so in the medium term. The arched elevation adjacent The Planks appears stable although this elevation will need to be tied to the new structure in order to maintain structural stability in the long term.
- 9.19. The car park elevation (SE) also appears in good structural condition other than some localised loose coping stones at high level. Some minor remedial works at high level are required. The elevation adjacent to the Forum (HSBC bank) has been temporarily propped and this appears satisfactory, there is some loose high level masonry which needs removing in the short term. This wall will require tying into any proposed structure if it is to be retained in order to maintain its long term stability.



Arched wall elevation adjacent to the Planks

Public Realm Analysis

- 9.20. The public realm around the site is generally of poor quality. The High Street carriageway and associated clutter dominate this route resulting in a poor pedestrian environment. Open spaces are used as surface car parking, adding little to the quality of the urban landscape and leave the listed buildings disconnected from the rest of Old Town.
- 9.21. Important features, such as the formal entrance to The Lawns, are not clearly identified and the setting of these is impacted on by signage. There is a lack of street furniture or way finding, with lighting provided by standard highway columns.
- 9.22. Surface finishes are in a varied state of repair, comprising basic finishes. Concrete kerbs provide definition between footways and carriageway with drop kerbs and tactile paving at pedestrian crossings.
- 9.23. The overall streetscape contributes little to quality of Old Town or the setting of the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange.



Existing public realm along High Street (facing north)

Highways - Existing Pedestrian, Vehicular and Car Parking Provision

- 9.24. The carriageway along High Street varies between 8.5m to over 10.0m at junction approaches; the footway varies between less than 2.0m to just over 4.0m.
- 9.25. Although High Street is a busy road, most public transport is routed along Newport Street only joining High Street/Marlborough Rd at the junction opposite the site.
- 9.26. The use of pedestrian guardrails together with traffic related clutter creates uncomfortable pinch points for pedestrians and while the surface car parks provide significant parking provision, they are typically under-utilised.
- 9.27. Highways issues should be addressed as part of the development and to encourage wider regeneration in the area. A Traffic Impact Assessment will be required to be submitted with any planning application to determine the extent of necessary off-site highway mitigation works.
- 9.28. An assessment of car parking requirements for the proposed land uses, as well as the need for any on-site public parking spaces will also have to be undertaken as part of the planning application process.



Existing junction at Newport Street

10.Design Considerations

(Refer to fig 5)

- 10.1. This section establishes key design principles based on analysis of the baseline data considered above and provides ideas and design recommendations that can lead to a successful re-development of the site.

Quality

- 10.2. The site is within Swindon's 'Old Town' conservation area and contains two Grade II listed buildings; as such it demands the highest standards of design and construction. This should permeate through the whole scheme from masterplanning to the design of individual buildings and the design of the public realm.

Response to Context

- 10.3. The project should preserve and enhance the special qualities of the iconic listed buildings through the careful conservation of the remaining fabric and the sensitive, contextual and contemporary regeneration of the remaining site.
- 10.4. The massing and form of any development should respond to the urban grain of the surrounding context including the scale and massing of surrounding buildings.
- 10.5. The proposed re-development is seen as an opportunity to remove some of the C20th buildings that detract from the area, to be replaced with buildings that extend the high quality public space from Wood Street, south along Marlborough Road, improving the busy junction between Newport Street and Marlborough Road in the process.

Existing Building

- 10.6. The individual language of each listed building should be understood to provide interesting reference for the development of a new architectural vocabulary for the site.
- 10.7. The majority of the significant fabric associated with the listed buildings is contained within the principle elevation of the Old Town Hall, the Corn Exchange Clock Tower and the arched elevation of the Butter Market. However, the remaining walls to the south west of the site contribute to the character of the site and should be retained as a means of preserving the patina of the site.
- 10.8. The volumes of the Corn Exchange, Old Town Hall and Butter Market are significant; as far as is practical any development should seek to retain these volumes and utilise them as singular spaces.
- 10.9. The Corn Exchange space is socially significant, remembered widely for its historic former uses. However given its large volume, challenging access, deep plan and limited number of external openings it is a very difficult space to reuse. Any development should pay particular attention to the reuse of this space from both a functional and design perspective.

Architectural Language

- 10.10. The language of any new buildings should not attempt to slavishly recreate the language of the historic buildings, but instead employ a simple, clean and contemporary language; referencing the surrounding historic buildings in their form, massing, and materiality.

Materiality

- 10.11. The materiality of the development should respond to the materiality of the historic buildings, employing local Purbeck limestone where possible. There

is scope to use different materials on the site; however this should be justified with reference to the historic buildings.

- 10.12. The quality and finish of the materials needs to respond to the language of 'facades' that is established within the Old Town Hall, Corn Exchange and Butter Market. This would reserve materials with a finer finish for the principle elevations of buildings and employ materials with a rougher materiality on secondary elevations.

Public Realm

- 10.13. Improvements to the public realm are seen as a key part of the regeneration of the site; The public realm elements, including the pedestrianisation of Market Square, and any necessary and directly related works to adjacent highways, as determined by a Traffic Impact Assessment, will need to be implemented as an integral part of the re-development proposals.

Existing Trees

- 10.14. The removal of the Beech Tree within the Market Square is considered to be acceptable providing sufficient benefit can be proven with a building in the same location. Consideration should be given to the benefit of planting a replacement tree within the redesigned Market Square. Development proposals will need to carefully consider the protection and wellbeing of other significant trees within adjoining curtilages.

A Possible Design Solution

10.15. This section makes reference to the sketch scheme developed by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studio Architects as an illustration of how future development might take place. The sketch scheme has been designed taking into account the conservation principles, design and development requirements that are set out in the earlier sections of this brief, and the need to achieve commercial viability. The proposals should not be treated as a prescriptive or exclusive set of requirements, but seen as a potential guide to the future development of the site and the intent of any proposed development.



Illustrative Scheme Design - 3 Dimensional Aerial View from the North-West - FCB Architects

fig 5

(1) Market Square

10.16. The Market Square is reinforced as the key public space within the Old Town reasserting the importance of the historic square. The area is retained as an open space which extends over the High Street and Dammas Lane with shared pedestrian and vehicular surface, retaining these vehicular routes while increasing the size and prestige of the Market Square. Areas could be subtly demarcated with street furniture to define zones, one of which could be used as an occasional market. The Market Square could also support an additional feature such as a piece of public art, a “landmark” tree, art or a reference to the historic Market Cross to further identify and lend character to the space.



Market Square (existing)

(2) Head of Square Building

10.17. The Head of Square building offers a symmetrical termination to the eastern edge of the Market Square which responds in language, materiality, form and massing to the Old Town Hall. At present the concept shows a building of five effective stories in order to achieve overall commercial viability. While removing a storey would create a more consistent height relationship with the Old Town and adjacent Dammas Lane buildings, if justified this extra storey is considered acceptable. It would be preferable to incorporate a public function at ground floor level which can open onto the square and create additional activity and animation. These points help highlight that careful attention to the detailed design of this building is required to achieve optimum relationships with other buildings addressing the market place and safeguard the reasonable amenities of the residential flats that are located immediately to the east.



Market Square & Head of Square Building (indicative)

fig 6

(3) The Old Town Hall

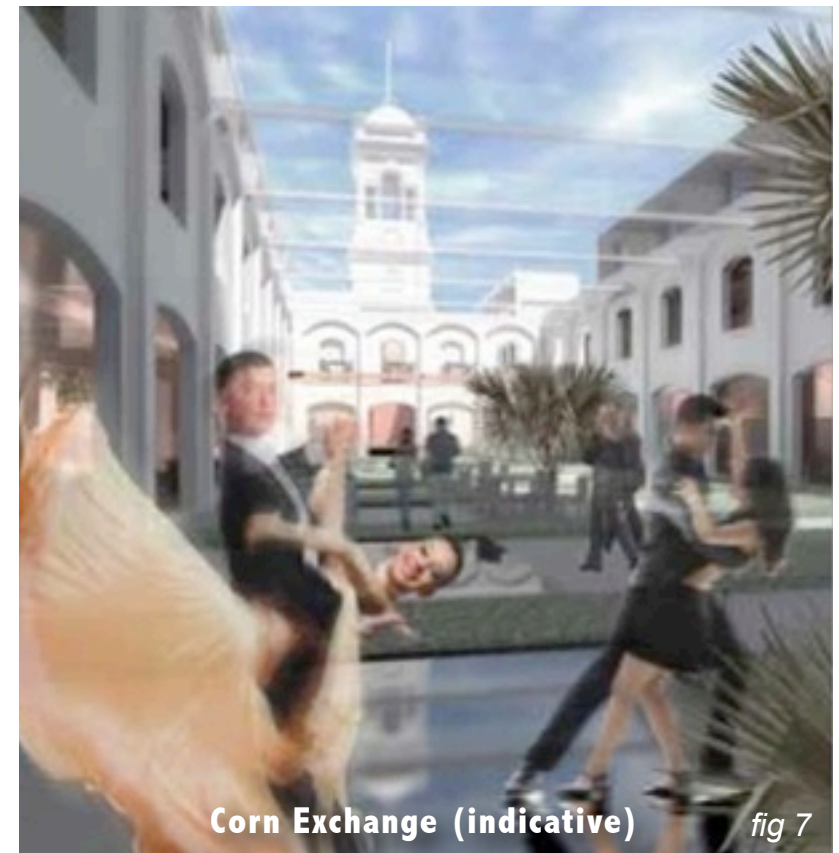
10.18. The remaining external walls of the Old Town Hall will be conservatively repaired and internal floors installed to match historic levels; however, given the loss and damage to the interior of the building, flexibility in the treatment of new internal spaces and details can be explored. The Old Town Hall is important to the creation of animation and life to the Market Square; consequently a public function at ground floor level is strongly encouraged. In addition it could offer a “front door” to the Corn Exchange or Newport Street Building behind (to the south) allowing visitors to enter the site through the Old Town Hall and proceed onto the spaces beyond.

(4) Corn Exchange

10.19. The Corn Exchange is a large and socially significant space which demands special attention due to its large volume, challenging access, deep plan and limited number of external openings. Being in the heart of the site the Corn Exchange has the potential to become a new covered external space providing fresh air, light and access to the surrounding buildings. A covered glass roof could provide additional weather protection for the space while creating a temperate zone which contributes to the passive heating / ventilation



of the surrounding buildings. The historic walls which surround the space would be retained and integrated into any future development as a built record of historic development on the site; however this is balanced with the opportunity to provide a perforated elevation between the Corn Exchange and the surrounding spaces encouraging activity to spill out of the surrounding spaces into the Corn Exchange. The primary point of access into the Corn Exchange is maintained from the Market Square through the clock tower itself. The illustrated sketch scheme positively utilises the clock tower as a publically accessible viewing platform providing views across Old Town and down onto the Market square and Corn Exchange.



(5) Butter Market

10.20. As with the Old Town Hall, the remaining external stone walls of the historic Butter Market will be conservatively repaired, but flexibility exists in the treatment of spaces and internal details. The space was previously a large single storey volume but there is scope to introduce new floor levels dividing the space vertically. The arched openings on the northeastern elevation have been incorporated into a single storey allowing these openings to be fully expressed both internally and externally. In addition, a central light well has been introduced into the space referencing the historic domed roof light on the former Butter Market.

(6) Newport Street Building

10.21. The new building proposed at the junction between Newport Street and Marlborough Road should respond to the height and massing of the Old Town Hall. It could wrap around the Corn Exchange space utilising the historic window openings in the first floor of the Corn Exchange to capture views down into the Corn Exchange space. The ground floor space along Marlborough Road could

be double height open space, generating interest and vitality to the street and allowing views across the full depth of the plan from Marlborough Road into the Corn Exchange.

(7) The Tower

10.22. A tall element could be incorporated into the proposals providing it is set back from the road, does not affect the pre-eminence of views to the Clock Tower and Church Spire, and the design and construction of any tall element is of the highest quality. The tower in the concept is located at the southern end of the Corn Exchange, creating balance with the existing Clock



Newport Street (existing)



Newport Street (indicative)

fig 8

Tower and stepping back from key views along Marlborough Road of the Clock Tower and Church Spire. Any tower should respond, in height and form, to the existing towers within the Old Town, and although it is understood that the function of this tower will to some extent guide its form it is clear that its design will need the most considered handling. Indeed the form and function of the tower will become symbolic for the regeneration of the Old Town as a whole: working with the existing Church Spire and Clock Tower which currently act as historic references to the religious and commercial life of the Old Town.

(8) The Podium

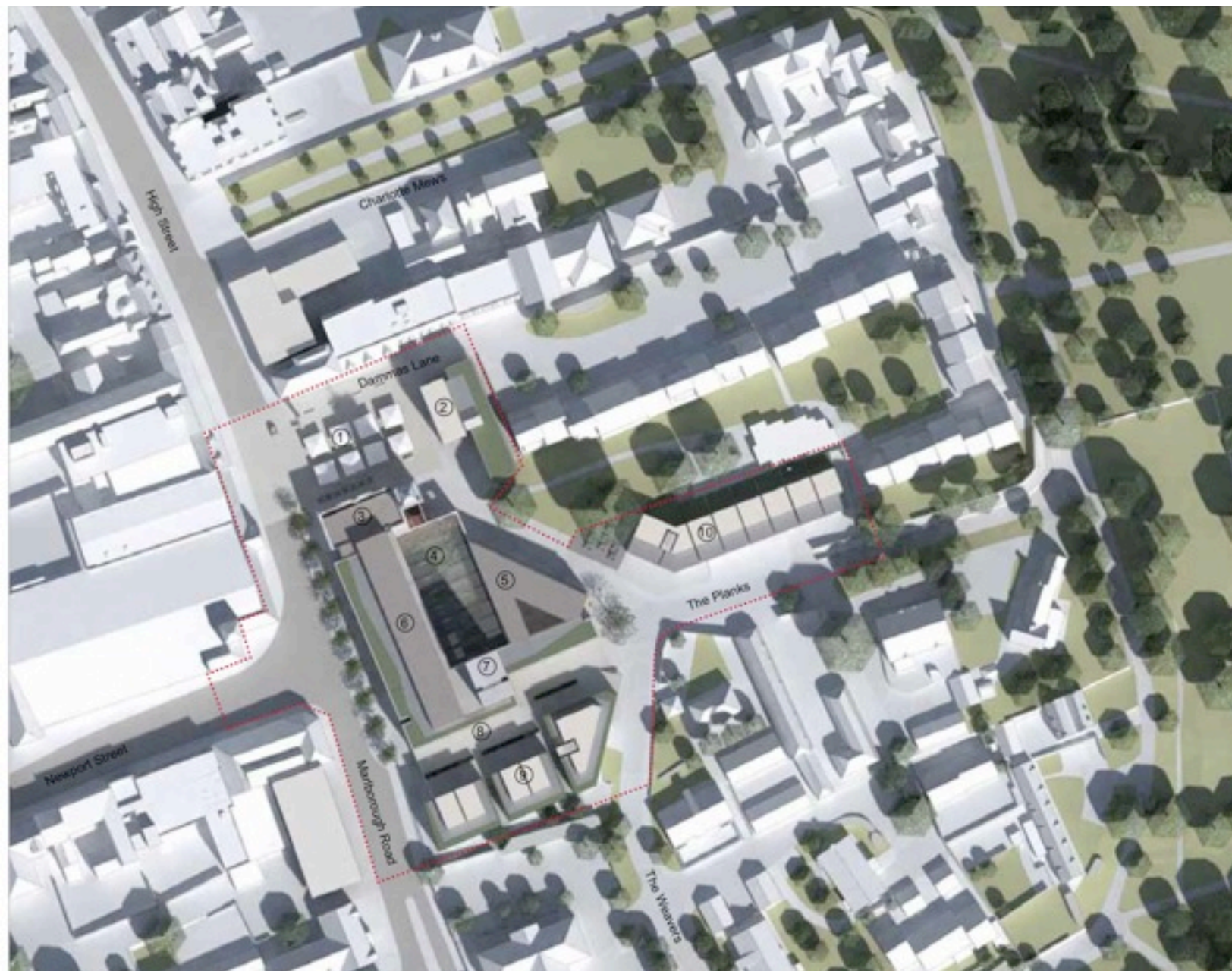
- 10.23. To the southern end of the site, in recognition of the current need to deliver on-site parking, a new plinth provides covered parking, access to additional below ground parking, service access to the Newport Street Building, and creates a private raised garden space for the surrounding residential buildings. In addition this plinth or podium can provide space for additional commercial space along its western elevation adding to the active frontage along Marlborough Street. Although potential exists to exploit the need for a podium as positively as possible, its height should be reduced as much as possible, working with the existing topography of the site by embedding itself to the north and revealing itself at the main points of entry to the south.

(9) Southern Residential Building

- 10.24. To the south there is the opportunity to introduce development which fragments in scale as the Old Town transitions into the residential neighbourhoods to the south of the site. Shown as residential in use, these units will sit on top of the podium, which provides an opportunity for parking, service space and raised gardens.

(10) Masons Lodge

- 10.25. Along the Planks to the east of the site a series of townhouses is introduced matching the scale and form of the surrounding terraced housing. On the corner of this site, adjacent to the Butter Market, a slightly taller apartment block could act as a transition building between its neighbours.

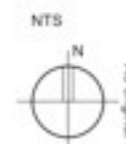


KEY



The Core Site
boundary

1. Market Square
2. Head of Square Building
3. The Old Town Hall
4. The Corn Exchange
5. The Butter Market
6. Newport Street Building
7. The Tower
8. The Podium
9. Southern Residential Buildings
10. The Masons Lodge



OS survey information courtesy of Swindon
Borough Council

Illustrative Scheme Design - Site Plan - FCB Architects

(C) Crown Copyright and Database Rights 100024296 2013

fig 9

11. Land Uses

- 11.1. The site occupies an urban space on the edge of the Old Town retail and commercial core. The site also relates closely to the adjacent residential areas of The Weavers, Henrietta Court, The Planks and Dammas Lane.
- 11.2. A residentially led mixed use development is considered appropriate for the site, reflecting the Council's aspirations for increased "town centre" living and provision of more mixed-use schemes to help sustain the appeal and vitality of Old Town.
- 11.3. Mixed-uses increase activity throughout the day and contribute to an increase in perceived public safety. The opportunity exists to explore other forms of development comprising uses in the following Use Classes;
 - Class A1 - retail
 - Class A2 - financial and professional services
 - Class A3 - restaurants and cafes
 - Class A4 - drinking establishments
 - Class B1 - offices not within Class A2
 - Class C1 - hotel
 - Class C3 - dwelling houses
 - Class D1 - non-residential institutions
 - Class D2 - assembly and leisure
- 11.4. The possibility exists to include other sites and buildings within a wider redevelopment scheme. If the Mason's Hall in The Planks is included, it is considered that the principal use should be residential due to the proximity to adjoining residential areas of Saxon Court and The Planks.

12. Transportation, Access & Parking Requirements

- 12.1. The site is in a sustainable location, being close to retail and community facilities and adjacent to streets that are used as primary bus routes. These are important considerations when assessing car parking requirements and required contributions towards highway and transport improvements, in accordance with Swindon Borough Local Plan Policies T1 and DS8 and, the Council's adopted Parking Standards Development Guidance Note (2007).
- 12.2. The redesign of Market Square to become a pedestrian space will need to incorporate vehicular access to Dammas Lane.
- 12.3. It will be necessary to consider how highway alterations can improve pedestrian crossing facilities between the site and the west side of High Street, including extending the new hard landscape and paving detail of Market Square across the High Street carriageway.
- 12.4. The development will be required to retain existing pedestrian links through and across the site.
- 12.5. The majority of the site lies just outside Parking Zone 1 (Parking Standards Guidance Note 2007), within which new flats are not required to provide any parking. As this site is in very close proximity to both shops and services in Old Town, as well as to public transport routes, the Council will not seek the maximum parking standard for this site.
- 12.6. The development will be required to provide car parking (underground) to support the proposed new uses on the site and consideration will be given to the requirement to redress the loss of public parking in the existing Planks and Market Square car parks. Both car parks are under-used at the current time and there will be a need to assess how many public parking spaces the scheme should provide on-site and whether there is a

requirement for, and ability to provide, additional parking provision (on-street or off-street) within Old Town.

- 12.7. Careful consideration of vehicular servicing requirements to the new development will be important and limited/time restricted use of primary pedestrian surfaces will, subject to detail, be preferred to the provision of service roads and lay-bys.

13. Services

- 13.1. The site comprises areas of land and existing uses that are served by electricity, gas, telecom, water and sewerage connections. The provision of upgraded service connections will need to be considered and provided as part of the development.
- 13.2. Thames Water advises that it is essential that developers demonstrate that adequate water supply and sewerage infrastructure capacity exists both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users. If a capacity problem were to be identified, and no improvements are programmed by the water company, then the developer will need to agree with the water authority what improvements are required and how they will be funded prior to occupation of the development.

14. Development, Viability & Land Assembly Issues

- 14.1. The primary purpose of this brief is to provide guidelines for the successful redevelopment of the site.
- 14.2. The Council accepts that only a commercially viable scheme will be built. It considers that its role as local planning authority is to ensure that development is sustainable and enhances its surroundings.

- 14.3. In the current economic climate the Council has re-examined its role in enabling the development of this site. A viable scheme can be achieved through a co-operative approach taking into account the following considerations;
- 14.4. The Council's Development Contributions Development Control Guidance Note 2010 (The Guidance Note) has operated since 2006 and was updated in 2010. The Guidance Note, excluding transport, contains the main requirements for infrastructure contributions that may be necessary to mitigate the impact of development on existing facilities and services as a consequence of the cumulative impact of development in the Borough. Its framework has been used to inform negotiations to secure the appropriate infrastructure package by way of planning obligation and/or planning condition on a site by site basis. In many circumstances there is no justification for reducing the identified costs of mitigation. The Guidance does however contain advice on how exceptional development costs that adversely impact on the economic viability of a development proposal can be considered. Whilst this document is adopted by the Council and in operation, the importance of realising the redevelopment of the Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange site is such that the Council will, without prejudice and in light of an evolving scheme(s), take in to account the exceptional circumstances of the site and consider whether foregoing a proportion of the normally required developer contributions, at the time of development, can be justified. In such circumstances, a post Development Appraisal would be required at completion of the development in order to determine whether additional contributions can be made.
- 14.5. The future use of the Guidance Note is under review as a consequence of the Council's decision to adopt a Community Infrastructure Levy 'CIL' for its area. CIL is the Government's chosen approach for development to make financial contributions towards the provision and maintenance of infrastructure within an area. CIL, once adopted, will become a mandatory

charge on development (a development cost) for the types of use that is set out in the locally adopted Charging Schedule. Thus, the adoption of CIL may become a material factor in the development costs of delivering regeneration of this site, subject to the timing of the submission of a planning application to develop the site. Furthermore CIL will not completely replace to use of s106 planning obligations as they will continue to be used to manage site-specific mitigation requirements that will continue to come forward under this proposal. It is anticipated that the Guidance Note will in time be replaced by Supplementary Planning Guidance on s106 planning obligations, or its application be restricted once CIL comes into force.

- 14.6. An important requirement of the brief is to remodel the Market Square and transform it into a high quality pedestrianised public space. It is recognised that this is a public area and therefore part of the public realm. Because the area falls within the “red line” of the brief it should not place an onerous financial obligation on any potential scheme. It is therefore anticipated that external funding will need to be secured to support the delivery the Market Square public realm works. The scale of the external contribution is likely to depend on the viability assessment of any new development proposal(s).
- 14.7. The Market Square is an important historic urban space within Old Town and its transformation will benefit both residents and visitors to Swindon as a whole. Whilst there are other competing priorities, including Wood Street and Victoria Road improvements, it is considered that the transformation of Market Square, as part of the re-development, would make it the single most significant environmental improvement to Old Town and should therefore have priority over other schemes.
- 14.8. Underground car parking is the favoured solution for the scheme. Whilst this approach has the potential to maximise above ground floor space, it will have a cost implication for any development. Should this be a prohibitively

expensive option then any provision for surface parking should not impact on the creation of a new Market Square and should ensure that effective pedestrian links and permeability are provided.

- 14.9. The Council accepts that the extensive fire damage to the two listed buildings makes meaningful historic restoration of the internal elements of the buildings unrealistic. This will reduce the cost of expensive restoration work, of the remaining building fabric, to the repair of the external walls and tower.
- 14.10. The Council owns the Dammas Lane (the old Market Square) and The Planks car parks and has agreed, in principle, that these sites should be included as part of the overall site, subject to conditions, to help facilitate a high quality development.
- 14.11. Forward Swindon Limited (FSL) has examined various viability appraisals based on this brief. This modelling suggests that, subject to certain assumptions, the brief and resultant scheme designs are capable of producing a viable development.
- 14.12. It is anticipated that to deliver a viable redevelopment that meets the objectives of the Brief other adjacent buildings will need to be included in the scheme. The illustrative design solution includes The Forum, currently occupied by HSBC Bank, and the Mason’s Lodge. It is hoped that this comprehensive approach to redevelopment can be achieved through agreement with third parties. Should this not be possible, the Council will consider the need to use its powers, under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and other relevant statutory provisions, to assemble the land needed for the development to proceed.

15. Appendices

Appendix i

Formal description of Listed Buildings

Corn Exchange and Town Hall Department of Culture, Media and Sport Ref: 8/157

The Square Grade: II

Swindon First Listed: 02.10.51 (formerly listed as the Locarno Ballroom and Clock Tower and Premises occupied by Brown & Plummer Ltd.)

Market hall and town hall. Built 1852-54 by Sampson Sage and E. Robertson of Swindon, extended as corn exchange 1866 by Wilson and Willcox of Bath now bingo hall and shops. Ashlar stone.

Roof not visible. Corn exchange 2-storey, 5 bays divided by giant Tuscan pilasters. Rusticated ground floor with arched openings between pilasters, originally open, now with C20 shop windows.

Lugged architraves to first floor casement windows, and moulded panel over Entablature and pediment over 3 central bays enclosing roundel. Balustrade square lantern with cornice and arch with bell. Extensions of 1866 provide corn exchange to rear on triangular site, and tower to left of town hall facade. Rock-faced stone with ashlar dressings. Tower of 4 stages, ground floor Ionic columns in antis. Architraves to first and second floor windows. Top level in form of open Venetian windows and corner Corinthian pilasters above clock chamber. Cornice and balustrade, and square dome with iron openwork crestings. Corn exchange to rear has arcaded elevation, 1 storey with roof balustrade. Interior not of special interest. Plans held in British Architectural Library.

Appendix ii

South West Design Review Panel Letters

Review 1: 11 June 2012

19 June 2012

Steve Rosler
Steve Rosler Limited
170 Paramount Building
Beckhampton Street
Swindon
SN1 2BJ

South West Design Review Panel
SWDRP 112 11 June 2012
Panel: Peter Clegg (Chair), Simon Carne, John Peverley

Swindon Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange
Restricted circulation: this letter is not for publication

Thank you for inviting us to look at this scheme. The Panel was grateful to you and your team for leading the site visit and to Forward Swindon for providing a venue for our meeting. We were glad that Swindon Borough Council, Forward Swindon and English Heritage took part in the meeting.

The Panel is strongly supportive of the principle of regenerating the area around The Square, Swindon's historic market square, and we see potentially great public benefit coming from your scheme. The listed buildings are worth retaining for their intrinsic merit, their role in Swindon's history and for the contribution they make as landmarks in the conservation area and beyond. And they warrant a better setting than the current parking. Moreover, relieving the dereliction at present blighting the High Street and bringing new life will contribute to revitalising the surrounding area and bring a considerable catalytic lift for the Old Town.

NE: Creating Excellence new office address: Dennett House, 11 Middle Street, Taunton, TA1 1SW
New registered address: Stafford House, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2PX

Confidential

We'd add that the Old Town has potential as a valuable quarter to complement the later development of the town and deserves to be better identified and promoted.

We'd advise you, however, not to underestimate the complexity of the site in a sensitive area, and the challenge of securing commercial viability while winning support and consents, and consequently the need for a strong team with experience of masterplanning complex urban mixed use sites and with skills in highways, streets and urban landscape design.

We note the long and complicated planning history of this site, though nothing has happened on site. We do not propose to dwell on previous schemes but to focus our efforts on helping to get a viable scheme moving ahead. We see the involvement of Forward Swindon in leading a working group as positive and we also welcome the positive involvement of the Council in guiding you and their willingness as landowner to look at developing their surface car parks. We hope that as planning authority they will see advantage in flexibility in terms of uses to facilitate a good scheme.

The Panel wishes to offer comments and suggestions on the area to be covered in a masterplan; the analysis we see as prerequisite to that plan; and on the initial plans you put to us.

We support the idea of a wider regeneration than that of the sites of the planning applications. The additional land will help realise commercial viability and reduce the pressure to over-develop. And it will improve sites of some mediocrity.

The red-line plan presented rightly brings in the HSBC Bank, the absence of which was a handicap to earlier schemes. The sites added to the west, east and north are useful enlargements but the fall into Wood Street is an indication of a desired relationship rather than part of the site.

The site should be the area under your influence. The masterplan, however, should look at the area that relates to The Square and the listed buildings: your red line (without its tail) plus environs and connections (of which Wood Street is one).

This masterplan – for which the market square might be a suitable focus and short title – needs to relate to the emerging city-centre masterplan commissioned by Forward Swindon. We hope you will meet soon with the team for the wider plan and ensure that both initiatives are working towards the same goals. There is also a task for Forward Swindon and the Council in relating your market square study to the wider plan (particularly the relationship of your site to the emerging proposals for other parts of the Old Town).

The market square masterplan needs to be based on analysis of a number of aspects. Some, we gather, are completed or under way including structural engineering studies and surveys of the listed buildings and archaeology. Other aspects that we shall hope to see next time include historic street pattern and extant heritage assets, topography and landscape features, views into and out of the area, pedestrian and vehicular routes including public transport, land uses including active frontages, and building heights. It would help to have sections related to topography and ideally modelling, better still a physical model as well. Only with such a baseline can one fully assess and validate the proposals you bring forward. Generally, a more cogent argument or logic underpinning your scheme would help you both to work it up and to convince others of its merits.

Confidential

Turning to the initial plans, we back the recognition of The Square once again as a focal point and meeting place, with related leisure uses. We'd encourage you to resist the temptation to make it excessively fussy or demarcated; it is small enough to work as a simple, open space – a market square, not a garden or leisure complex.

We'd encourage simplicity too in the treatment of the eastern end of the Square. If there is to be a building then it should be have a straight-edged geometry as befits a square and be relatively ordinary in deference to the listed buildings, not the grand gesture implied by a sweeping curve. Clearly, there is a strong case for retaining the beech tree but we'd suggest evaluating the options of the tree with no building; the tree and a smaller building to the north; the tree and a narrow building to the east; and a larger building without the tree.

The principle of building on the car park south of the bank building so as to re-enclose the street is sound, indeed we'd apply this also to the site north of the bank where it would be better to repair the street frontage than to make a space subsidiary to the nearby square (and where there is no existing façade on the Town Hall).

Forming a courtyard within the new building to the south is worth exploring especially if it forms part of a new route to connect The Planks (and the park beyond) to the street. But you would need to see if the space would be large and light enough to work well.

We must await your further work including a study of building heights but, having visited the site, our inclination (we are not prescribing!) is that four storeys would be appropriate on the street frontage but with some diminution in the main to respect the smaller scale buildings behind the site. We'd suggest you explore the option of series of separate buildings as well as the current option of large integrated structures. We'd encourage you to think of at least two buildings against Saxon Court: one healing the Square (subject to the tree evaluation) and one or more towards and on The Planks. There might even be a small space at the node of The Planks, the two existing lanes and the new route through to the street.

Your early work raises the question of possible landmarks and gateways. Here, we offer no comment at this stage and will await your justification. Our initial thoughts above on building heights do not preclude going higher for a landmark building but we would need to see rigorous investigation and justification.

You rightly wish make the traffic on the High Street less dominant and we support including the street as a whole in your study. The Council as highway authority has a major contribution to make to the success of your scheme and the regeneration of the Old Town. We'd certainly favour conceiving The Square as having a shared surface running to the base of the buildings on its four sides, one of which happens to be across the street and so traffic would run over one part of the Square but subservient to it.

Then there is the question of how to handle the listed buildings themselves. An alternative to reuse of the walls in the case of the Locarno is to build away from them. This would make new and old distinct, so celebrating not losing the fine masonry your scheme inherits. In fact, this route might afford you more floor space since a building within might rise above the walls not be defined by them.

Confidential

We would encourage you to return as you envisage for design review input into the masterplan, and a third time prior to a detailed planning application. We wish you well and look forward to helping further towards a successful outcome.

Yours sincerely

Timothy Cantelli
Manager, South West Design Review Panel

Cc Swindon Borough Council
Forward Swindon
English Heritage

*Confidentiality

Since the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the Panel, this letter is in confidence to the addressee and those listed as being sent copies. There is no objection to the letter being shared within the respective practices/organisations.

SWDRP reserves the right to make the guidance known should the views contained in this letter be made public by others in whole or in part.

The letter would be made available to any public inquiry concerning the scheme.

The letter would also be made available to a subsequent SWDRP session for the same site (or, if relevant, an adjacent site) or to another design review panel should a scheme go before them.

The letter could be made public when the scheme goes forward as a planning application if the applicants so wish.

If you do not require this letter to be kept confidential, please let us know.

Review 2: 21 November 2012

Confidential

SOUTH WEST
Design
Review
Panel

28 November 2012

Steve Rosier
Swindon Corn Exchange Limited
5 Harlestone Road
Coleview
Swindon
SN3 4ED

Dear Steve

South West Design Review Panel
SWDRP 117 21 November 2012

Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange, Swindon (returning scheme)

Attending Panel members: M J Long (Chair), Simon Carne, John Peverley
Restricted circulation: this letter is not for publication*

Thank you for bringing this scheme to us again. We were grateful that Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council took part, and regretted that English Heritage were prevented from taking part by travel disruption.

The Panel was heartened by the progress made since the initial review on 11 June 2012. We remain supportive of the principle of regenerating this area, bringing the listed buildings on your site back to life. So it was good to see the scheme developing and to hear that you are cautiously optimistic about viability in these difficult times.

We were heartened too by the sound analytical basis you now have for moving forward. The masterplan your team outlined is underpinned by a more in depth understanding of historic street pattern and extant heritage assets, topography and landscape features, views into and out of the area, pedestrian and vehicular routes.

Design Review affiliated with



Confidential

We support the simple and rational approach you are taking in the masterplan. The quantum of development you envisage seems acceptable at this stage in urban design terms. At the same time, we wouldn't wish you to be so simple and rational that a formulaic and predictably even scheme emerges. The last thing the High Street requires is slabs. And you shouldn't feel you have to defer to the listed buildings so much that the new buildings lack interest of their own. Thus, we'd encourage you to license your designers to be creative as well as responsive. We'd like to see a scheme that is not smooth and bland throughout but has its own variety and interest. Options for a vertical element should be explored. There is in fact scope for exceeding a datum (that is a point of reference, not a formula or limit) of four storeys, here and there, most probably back from the High Street and towards the south or east. And a datum equally is not a minimum so parts could be lower than four storeys.

If the outcome is a complex of old and new buildings that cohere and yet contrast, where the new have strength and quality sparked by the old, and with the whole having a vigour and presence even greater than that there now, then the scheme will make a very significant and welcome contribution to the revival and identity of the Old Town.

The Panel welcomes the principle of bringing the building line on the High Street forward. It would help the scheme and the Old Town to have a slightly narrower street. It would bring an opportunity to provide more generous and attractive pedestrian spaces. And we've already said we wish your scheme to have a strong presence on the street.

We back the recognition of The Square as a focal point and meeting place once again. We'd encourage you to resist the temptation to break it up and have planting; it is small enough to work as a simple, open space – a market square, not a garden or leisure complex. We are glad to see that you are pursuing the idea we favoured last time of running to the base of the buildings on its four sides, one of which happens to be across the street.

We see the logic of a building on the eastern edge of The Square having a straight-edged geometry but we also see that the previous building was not perfectly orthogonal so there is scope for being slightly out of line. The beech tree question is not fully resolved, we gather, and we'd like to see the evaluation of the options we put forward of the tree with no building; the tree and a smaller building to the north; the tree and a narrow building to the east; and a larger building without the tree.

Forming a courtyard within the horseshoe building off a new route to connect The Planks (and the park beyond) to the street is welcome. But you need to be sure the space would be large and light enough to work well. It might be beneficial to break up the horseshoe to admit more light.

We did moot a small space last time at the node of The Planks, the two existing lanes and the new route through to the street but we had in mind a pocket space not, as you call it, a 'square'. The Square is the only square you need. A space by The Planks should be subservient to The Square, tiny and informal, reinforcing the lane character here. Too much public realm in the scheme might drain energy from where you need it: the street and Square. We'd question also forming the building behind (#8) with a straight edge as if it were on the High Street. It could be less formal, perhaps acknowledging the geometry of the Locarno or following its own idiosyncrasy.

There could be opportunities to form routes or openings where buildings come together such as behind the Town Hall – it would be worth careful investigation to see if delicate routes could be made.

Page 2 of 3

Confidential

We support the idea of a wider regeneration than that of the current site. We wish you well in seeking to bring in nearby sites of some visual mediocrity such as the ski shop and taekwondo building.

We reiterate our appreciation of the positive involvement of Forward Swindon and the Council in the evolving scheme.

The matter of uses was implicit in our discussions; it was sometimes difficult to know how a space could be used or how a building should, say, be orientated, without a surer idea of what use is going to be viable and we look forward to a firmer idea at the next review. We'd encourage you to consider various likely uses as part of the design investigations and there might be uses including public ones that the Council or Forward Swindon could bring to the table.

It would also help next time to have sections and ideally a physical model. Montages would be useful too such as to help us assess the visual impact of the scheme at points along the High Street and Newport Street.

We wish you well and look forward to helping further towards a successful outcome.

Yours sincerely

Timothy Cantell
Manager, South West Design Review Panel

Cc English Heritage, Forward Swindon, Swindon Borough Council

*Confidentiality

Since the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the Panel, this letter is in confidence to the addressee and those listed as being sent copies. There is no objection to the letter being shared within the respective practices/organisations.

SWDRP reserves the right to make the guidance known should the views contained in this letter be made public by others in whole or in part.

The letter would be made available to any public inquiry concerning the scheme.

The letter would also be made available to a subsequent SWDRP session for the same site (or, if relevant, an adjacent site) or to another design review panel should a scheme go before them.

The letter could be made public when the scheme goes forward as a planning application if the applicants so wish.

If you do not require this letter to be kept confidential, please let us know.

Page 3 of 3

Review 3: 19 February 2013

Confidential

SOUTH WEST Design Review Panel

25 February 2013

Steve Rosier
Director, Swindon Corn Exchange Limited
Harlestone Road
Coleview
Swindon SN3 4ED

Dear Steve

South West Design Review Panel
SWDRP 124 19 February 2013

Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange, Swindon (returning scheme)
Attending Panel members: M J Long (Chair), Simon Carne, John Peverley

*Restricted circulation: this letter is not for publication**

Thank you for bringing this scheme to us again, following our reviews on 11 June and 21 November 2012. We were grateful that English Heritage, Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council took part. We'd like to thank the Council for hosting the meeting.

The Panel was encouraged by the progress made since the review three months earlier. It is increasingly evident to us that a major factor in this challenging scheme making progress in a difficult time is the positive involvement of the steering group and we'd like to acknowledge their collaborative work on the evolving scheme. It is a model process.

It was pleasing to see that much of what we said previously had been heeded, particularly about a hierarchy of spaces with The Square pre-eminent. The new courtyard is a great concept (albeit a challenge to detail and to have character at a reasonable cost) and we also welcome the broadening and greening of the pavement on the street.

Design Review affiliated with



Confidential

Our main comment is about the podium. We can see a case for servicing out of sight and for releasing surface parking for more appropriate use. But against that we'd weigh the dead frontage imposed on the street (probably with ventilation grilles etc.) and the awkward challenge a podium poses for the southern part of the scheme, including the unattractive and narrow stairs from the High Street. It was hard to see how people would use the area above the podium: a large stairway encourages arrival from the east but apparently does not lead anywhere, not to the courtyard nor obviously to the High Street. It was not clear whether the podium would be a useful extension to the public realm, providing a link between the High Street and the Planks, or whether it would be a semi-private area.

We wondered if there might be a simpler basement or undercroft parking arrangement that was less problematic, or even entirely underground parking with a ground level link between the High Street and The Planks. If the podium is kept, then we'd ask for more consideration of how it is resolved. We'd need to see the street elevation and we'd want to be convinced that there really was no way of enlivening the street frontage south of the hotel.

A more subtle approach to the southern courtyard could, for instance lead to a differentiation between public space (which might lead in some way to the courtyard) and more private residential space which would not require a major approach from the surrounding streets. What seems to be a lack of permeability here leads on to our wider suggestion that in this scheme, with changes as one moves around, it would be good to have routes or openings between buildings and spaces in addition to the essential signed ones – some might be delicate and unexpected, known to those who explore.

Turning to the question posed about a tower, the Panel considers that a tower in principle is acceptable. Your notion of a dialogue of the towers is intriguing and would enrich the courtyard. You might look at shifting it slightly to the east. The tower would have to be beautifully designed. And it may prove difficult to derive a floor plate that is large enough to be viable yet engenders a tower slender enough not to outweigh the Town Hall's tower. But it is well worth taking the idea further.

Although we have not seen the options analysis we hoped for regarding the beech tree question, we see the logic of a building on the eastern edge giving a firm edge to the head of The Square and we accept a building here without the tree. If there is a second tower we'd certainly favour the lower option for the building, and perhaps in any case this is better for The Square.

The ground floor of the hotel struck us as an uncomfortably large room. Much as we welcome the courtyard, we do not see this as implying a comparable adjacent space. We'd prefer more sub division (across or lengthways), still allowing glimpses of the courtyard from the street.

Not the least benefit of your scheme is the revival of the Town Hall. We welcome the idea of allowing access up the tower. We'd encourage you to see if more could be made of the noble first-floor windows: they should be assets for something more than ordinary hotel bedrooms.

Review 4: 10 May 2013

Confidential

We remain supportive of the principle of regenerating this area, bringing the listed buildings on your site back to life. So it was good to see the scheme taking shape as a set of old and new buildings and spaces. You have a strong basis for going ahead from the analysis undertaken earlier. You have an able team in place and we'd stress that the quality of the architecture must remain high right through to completion.

The matter of what uses are going to be viable is key and we gather you will shortly have a firmer grasp of this. We wish you well and very much want to see a successful outcome.

Yours sincerely

Timothy Cantell
Manager, South West Design Review Panel

cc English Heritage, Forward Swindon, Swindon Borough Council

*Confidentiality

Since the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the Panel, this letter is in confidence to the addressee and those listed as being sent copies. There is no objection to the letter being shared within the respective practices/organisations.

SWDRP reserves the right to make the guidance known should the views contained in this letter be made public by others in whole or in part.

The letter would be made available to any public inquiry concerning the scheme.

The letter would also be made available to a subsequent SWDRP session for the same site (or, if relevant, an adjacent site) or to another design review panel should a scheme go before them.

The letter could be made public when the scheme goes forward as a planning application if the applicants so wish.

If you do not require this letter to be kept confidential, please let us know.

Confidential

SOUTH WEST
**Design
Review
Panel**

10 May 2013

Steve Rosier
Director, Swindon Corn Exchange Limited
Harlestone Road
Coleview
Swindon
SN3 4ED

Dear Steve

South West Design Review Panel
SWDRP 126 April 2013

Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange, Swindon (retaining scheme)
Desk Top Review by Panel members: M J Long (Chair), Simon Carne, John Peverley

*Restricted circulation: this letter is not for publication**

Thank you for the letter from the working group in response to my letter about the desk top review. I am happy for this letter to appear in the brief along with other SWDRP letters.

This letter is a response to the working group letter. The Panel has not seen any iteration of the scheme since the desk top review in April and thus this is not a further review but a clarification of our letter on the desk top review.

It is good news, since the desk top review, that the viability testing has been reassuring. It is good to know that the quantities we have been shown represent a workable scheme. In fact, we would like the scheme described to be taken as a maximum bulk on the site; if it is found that quantities need to increase materially, then in our view this would be grounds for a careful re-examination of the scheme.

Design Review affiliated with



Confidential

The Panel appreciate the careful attention that has been given to our comments. We realise that not every point in every particular will be accepted. Many of the Working Group's responses concern matters that we can look at further at detailed stage. In particular, in the light of your assurances about the southern route past the duplexes, we will not sustain our comments about the southern square and its contents. We did not gather from the plans that the footpath will open onto the external spaces in front of Henrietta Court, and so this route could provide the east-west pedestrian link.

Nothing in your letter prevents us from wanting the scheme to go ahead. The Panel hopes the brief will be approved and that the scheme will proceed to the next stage. We are supportive of this scheme which is set to bring substantial public benefit in regenerating this area and bringing the listed buildings on your site back to life.

Yours sincerely

Timothy Cantell
Manager, South West Design Review Panel

Cc English Heritage, Forward Swindon, Swindon Borough Council

*Confidentiality

Since the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the Panel, this letter is in confidence to the addressee and those listed as being sent copies. There is no objection to the letter being shared within the respective practices/organizations.

SWDRP reserves the right to make the guidance known should the views contained in this letter be made public by others in whole or in part.

The letter would be made available to any public inquiry concerning the scheme.

The letter would also be made available to a subsequent SWDRP session for the same site (or, if relevant, an adjacent site) or to another design review panel should a scheme go before them.

The letter could be made public when the scheme goes forward as a planning application if the applicants so wish.

If you do not require this letter to be kept confidential, please let us know.

Page 2 of 2

16.Evidence Base Work

Evidence Base i

Swindon Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange Heritage Assessment, Oxford City Council Heritage and Specialist Services, December 2012.

Evidence Base ii

Old Town Hall and Corn Exchange, South West Design Review Panel Presentation, Illman Young Landscape Architects, November 2012.

Evidence Base iii

Swindon Old Town Hall & Corn Exchange Illustrative Sketch Scheme, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, March 2013.