

The Background to the Inner Court

The older buildings in Cupar's town centre date from the several periods of the town's history of economic growth. On the main streets, buildings were adapted as the local economy grew and on occasion they were re-placed. As the local economy evolved, land to the rear of the main streets was built upon to accommodate stables, wash-houses and industries which supported the primary activities of the main street buildings. However, this 'cheek-by-jowl' development came to an end as the town expanded during the last century. Goods could be transported easily from industrial estates and tighter building standards made the older back-buildings obsolete. Often they fell derelict as no further lasting demand was shown in such property. Clearance and re-development became the solution but the back-land location was not commercially attractive. How could the problem of such dereliction within the Conservation Area be resolved?

Because of the visibility of the derelict property lying to the rear of Crossgate the Development Trust chose to promote a regeneration partnership to bring forward appropriate proposals for the re-development of this central area.

The re-development area stretches from Kirk Wynd north and across a small section of Bonnygate Car Park to include the Bonnygate 'Gap Site'. The partner envision creating an 'Inner Court' of new and refurbished buildings, a better public realm and improved pedestrian connections through the existing George Inn Pend and linking the Bonnygate with Kirk Wynd.

In May 2015, the Trust approached Fife Council, Kingdom Housing Association and to Fisher and Donaldson Ltd. We proposed that a feasibility study should be commissioned to assess the design possibilities and the financial viability of new development. This was readily agreed. The partners formed a steering group chaired by the Trust and approved a detailed study brief and budget.

The Cupar-based architects, Arc were appointed to carry out the feasibility study. Arc would draw upon engineers and surveyors in making the study.

The resulting development design concept retains a small car park area to Bonnygate and Kirk Wynd, provides for 30 affordable housing units, and includes creative work-space units. The design enhances the public realm, improves pedestrian links, and respects the context of the adjacent listed properties and the closes within the Conservation Area and takes account of applicable planning policies. The Trust then commissioned the preparation of a concept design and a market analysis to obtain demand and rentals information for the creative work-space units. Cost estimates for site clearance and subsequent development have also been prepared.

The estimates of cost, property market value, and of residual land value will inform the financial appraisal to be made by Kingdom Housing. The re-development of what is a 'brown field' site is burdened by costs of clearance, of mitigating site issues, of re-engineering infrastructure, etc. The availability of grants to support the funding of the development costs is being explored.

The design concept produced by Arc was placed on public exhibition and attracted popular support. It is intended that a planning application for planning in principle will be submitted to Fife Council on a joint basis by Kingdom Housing Association and the Development Trust. The application will be the subject of further public consultation.

David Kirk, 8th February 2018