

Perth and Kinross Council
Development Management Committee – 10 June 2015
Report of Handling by Development Quality Manager

**Change of use and alterations from school to form 8 dwellinghouses
St Stephens RC Primary School, John Street, Blairgowrie**

Ref. No: 15/00518/FLL

Ward No: 3 - Blairgowrie and the Glens

Summary

This report recommends approval of the application for the change of use of and alterations to the former St Stephens Primary School in John Street, Blairgowrie. The development is considered to comply with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan and there are no material considerations apparent which would outweigh the Development Plan.

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

- 1 The former St Stephens RC Primary School is a category B listed building located within Blairgowrie Conservation Area. The top of John Street finishes at the entrance to the former school building which is situated in an elevated position, its principal elevation facing south-east and providing an attractive vista at the end of this street. The immediate surrounding area is predominantly residential consisting mainly of detached and semi-detached dwelling houses.
- 2 The site comprises the school building, former bicycle sheds, temporary classroom and playground. The site area is 1,150 square metres. The total internal floor area of the school building is 354 square metres.
- 3 The original school building dates from 1841. It is a tall, single storey building with pedimented roof designed in the classical tradition with an impressive pedimented portico on the front elevation. The principal windows are sash and case with a 16 pane pattern. The boundary walls and gates are also listed by curtilage. A single storey flat-roofed extension, relatively large in floor plan, was added in the later half of the 20th Century on the north-west (rear) and south-west elevations.
- 4 St Stephens School has been lying vacant since 2009 when the new Blairgowrie School Campus came into operation. It is included in the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland. In 2012 a planning application was submitted for change of use of the building into a wellbeing centre but this was later withdrawn. The present applicant submitted a planning application earlier this year for change of use and alteration to form 9 dwelling units. This application was withdrawn after it was intimated to the applicant's agent that the proposal would not be supported due to the extent of alteration to the listed building and concerns expressed by Transport Planning.

- 5 The proposal is to convert the school building into 8 dwelling units. The dwelling units will comprise 7 one-bedroom dwellings and 1 studio apartment. The studio apartment is the smallest dwelling measuring 19.43 square metres in floor area. The floor areas of the one-bedroom dwellings range from 37.52 sq.m. to 49.40 sq.m. The dwellings are described in the design brief as affordable private rented houses. 9 parking spaces are shown within the site adjacent to the south-west boundary wall. The temporary classroom structure will be removed. The existing bicycle shelter will be retained for bicycles and also bin storage.

NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 6 The Scottish Government expresses its planning policies through The National Planning Framework, the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Planning Advice Notes (PAN), Creating Places, Designing Streets, National Roads Development Guide and a series of Circulars.
- 7 The Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) was published on 23 June 2014. It sets out national planning policies which reflect Scottish Ministers' priorities for operation of the planning system and for the development and use of land. The SPP promotes consistency in the application of policy across Scotland whilst allowing sufficient flexibility to reflect local circumstances. It directly relates to:
- the preparation of development plans;
 - the design of development, from initial concept through to delivery; and
 - the determination of planning applications and appeals.
- 8 Of particular relevance to this application are:
- Paragraphs 36 – 46 'Placemaking'
 - Paragraphs 135 – 144 'Valuing the Historic Environment'

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 9 The Development Plan for the area comprises the TAYplan Strategic Development Plan 2012-2032 and the Perth and Kinross Local Development Plan 2014.

TAYplan Strategic Development Plan 2012 – 2032 - Approved June 2012

- 10 The overall vision of the Tay Plan states *“By 2032 the TAYplan region will be sustainable, more attractive, competitive and vibrant without creating an unacceptable burden on our planet. The quality of life will make it a place of first choice, where more people choose to live, work and visit and where businesses choose to invest and create jobs.”*
- 11 The relevant policy is, in summary:
- 12 **Policy 2: Shaping Better Quality Places**

PERTH AND KINROSS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014

13 The Local Development Plan was adopted by Perth and Kinross Council on 3 February 2014. It is the most recent statement of Council policy and is augmented by Supplementary Guidance.

14 The principal relevant policies are, in summary:

Policy HE2 - Listed Buildings

15 There is a presumption in favour of the retention and sympathetic restoration, correct maintenance and sensitive management of listed buildings to enable them to remain in active use. The layout, design, materials, scale, siting and use of any development which will affect a listed building or its setting should be appropriate to the building's character, appearance and setting.

Policy HE3A - Conservation Areas

16 Development within a Conservation Area must preserve or enhance its character or appearance. The design, materials, scale and siting of a new development within a Conservation Area, and development outwith an area that will impact upon its special qualities should be appropriate to its appearance, character and setting. Where a Conservation Area Appraisal has been undertaken the details should be used to guide the form and design of new development proposals.

Policy PM1A – Placemaking

17 Development must contribute positively to the quality of the surrounding built and natural environment, respecting the character and amenity of the place. All development should be planned and designed with reference to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Policy PM1B – Placemaking

18 All proposals should meet all eight of the placemaking criteria.

Policy PM2 - Design Statements

19 Design statements are normally required if a development comprises five or more dwellings, affects the character of a listed building or affects the character and/or appearance of a conservation area.

Policy PM3 - Infrastructure Contributions

20 Where the cumulative impact of new developments will exacerbate a current or generate a future need for additional infrastructure provision or community facilities, planning permission will only be granted where contributions which are reasonably related to the scale and nature of the proposed development are secured.

Policy PM2 - Design Statements

- 21 Design Statements should normally accompany a planning application if the development comprises 5 or more dwellings, is a non-residential use which exceeds 0.5 ha or if the development affects the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, Historic Garden, Designed Landscape or the setting of a Listed Building or Scheduled Monument.

Policy RD1 - Residential Areas

- 22 In identified areas, residential amenity will be protected and, where possible, improved. Small areas of private and public open space will be retained where of recreational or amenity value. Changes of use away from ancillary uses such as local shops will be resisted unless supported by market evidence that the existing use is non-viable. Proposals will be encouraged where they satisfy the criteria set out and are compatible with the amenity and character of an area.

Policy RD4 - Affordable Housing

- 23 Residential development, including conversions, consisting of 5 or more units should include provision of an affordable housing contribution amounting to an equivalent of 25% of the total number of units proposed. Whenever practical, the affordable housing should be integrated with and indistinguishable from the market housing.

Policy TA1B - Transport Standards and Accessibility Requirements

- 24 Development proposals that involve significant travel generation should be well served by all modes of transport (in particular walking, cycling and public transport), provide safe access and appropriate car parking. Supplementary Guidance will set out when a travel plan and transport assessment is required.

OTHER POLICIES

- 25 Perth and Kinross Council Supplementary Guidance:-

Blairgowrie Conservation Area Appraisal 2007

Developer Contributions; Affordable Housing.

SITE HISTORY

- 26 12/01145/FLL Alterations and change of use from primary school to wellbeing centre (Class 11, Assembly & Leisure) 6 September 2012 Application Withdrawn
- 27 14/02146/FLL Change of use of primary school and alterations and extension to form 9 dwellinghouses 3 March 2015 Application Withdrawn

- 28 15/00519/LBC Alterations to form 8 dwellinghouses: The accompanying listed building consent application to the application subject to this report has been approved under delegated powers.

CONSULTATIONS

External

- 29 **Scottish Water** - No comments received.

Internal

- 30 **Transport Planning** - No objections. The number of parking spaces provided is acceptable.
- 31 **Environmental Health** - No adverse comments in relation to this application.
- 32 **Contributions Officer** - The Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance will not apply to any of the proposed dwellings.
- 33 **Affordable Housing Officer** - All the dwelling units are very small and therefore may be considered to be unsubsidised low cost housing.
- 34 **Community Waste Advisor - Environment Service** - Residents should present waste and recycling bins to John Street for uplift. Residents will be issued with 2x 240 litre wheelie bins collected on alternate weeks. The developer should make provision for the storage of these containers.
- 35 **Education and Children's Services** - As the Newhill Primary School will reach the 80% capacity threshold ECS requests that the Finalised Primary Education and New Housing Contributions Policy be applied to this application.

REPRESENTATIONS

- 36 A total of 11 letters of representation were received during the first advertisement period for the application.

The representations have raised the following relevant issues: -

- Density of the development is not compatible with surrounding residential area;
- Increased traffic and pollution;
- Insufficient number of parking spaces, spillage of vehicles into John Street and Newton Terrace;
- No turning area at the top of John Street;
- Congestion with bin collection and possible smells from bin storage;
- Overlooking and loss of privacy;
- Increased noise and disturbance day and night;
- Impact on the character of the listed building and the conservation area.

- 37 All the relevant planning issues which have been raised are addressed in the Appraisal section of this report.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

38

Environment Statement	Not required
Screening Opinion	Not required
Environmental Impact Assessment	Not required
Appropriate Assessment	Not required
Design Statement / Design and Access Statement	Submitted
Reports on Impact or Potential Impact	Not required

APPRAISAL

Policy Appraisal

- 39 Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) requires the determination of the proposal to be made in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The determining issues here are whether the proposals comply with Development Plan policy or if there are other material considerations, which justify a departure from policy. The relevant policies to be considered are contained within the adopted Perth and Kinross Local Development Plan 2014. These are outlined in the policy section above and will be considered in more detail below.

Design/Layout

- 40 The design utilises the existing footprint of the building and no new extensions are proposed. The external alterations to the listed building are relatively minor compared to the previous scheme which was considered unacceptable. The centre windows behind the portico on the principal elevation are to be altered to create entrance doors to two of the dwelling units. This is considered acceptable as these two windows were originally the doorways for boys and girls entrances. The existing laid-pane windows are relatively recent. The large scale drawings submitted for these new entrance doors show the doors as predominantly glazed with new, top hung windows above in a laid-pane astragal pattern. It is considered that the doors should be more solid in design and appearance and efforts should be made to retain and adapt the upper sashes of the existing windows.
- 41 The upper windows should open inwards rather than outwards to lessen the visual impact. Amended design details should be submitted for further approval through a condition attached to any consent. An existing bipartite window on the north-east wing is to be changed to a new entrance door. Some windows and doors on the more recent flat-roofed extension are to be blocked up and two new windows are shown on the north-west (rear) elevation.

- 42 New access ramps are proposed to the stepped platform of the portico and also to serve the north-east and south-west wings. Further design details of these ramps will be required.
- 43 Internally the extent of intervention and alteration to the original floor plan layout is less than the previous, withdrawn scheme. The two main classrooms will be sub-divided in order to create workable dwellings but there will be no upper levels installed or breaking through ceiling plates.
- 44 The former playground area will be utilized for a communal amenity space and parking provision. The unattractive and dilapidated temporary classroom structure will be removed. The boundary walls and original gate piers and gates will be retained. Informal tree and shrub planting is shown on the north-east and south-west boundaries. A detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme is required.

Residential Amenity

- 45 There will be a degree of impact on residential amenity in terms of increased vehicular traffic, noise and privacy. Some of the points raised in the representations refer to the previous use of the school where there were specific periods in the morning and afternoon when there was peak activity but in the evenings and at weekends there was no disturbance as the school was closed. Now the concern is that there will be potential disturbance at all times of the day.
- 46 It should be noted that the previous school, in terms of land use, may have potentially operated activities during evenings and weekends. It is considered that traffic generated by eight relatively small dwellings will not be significantly greater than what could have been generated by the previous use.
- 47 The north-east and south-west sides of the site which border neighbouring properties are flanked by stone boundary walls. There will be no significant overlooking from existing or new windows in the school building.
- 48 It is unlikely that the building will ever be used as a school again and an alternative use needs to be found for the future of this historic building. A residential use would be preferable to a commercial use in terms of residential amenity. There are some suggestions that a smaller number of dwelling units would be more acceptable in terms of traffic generation and noise. The applicant's agent suggests that this is not necessarily the case as larger properties may attract families with more than one car per household and potentially more visitors with cars.

Access/Traffic/Transport

- 49 The revisions to the proposed development that reduce the number of units to 8, small single bedroom dwellings and the proposed 9 parking spaces is considered appropriate for the development. The proposed parking also includes covered cycle parking for 8 cycles which is also appropriate. The

traffic generated by 8 small dwellings will be less that could be generated by the buildings previous use and the Council's Traffic and Road Safety team have offered no objections.

- 50 Representations have been made regarding the fact that there is no turning area at the top of John Street and the increased congestion that would arise. Large vehicles, such as the refuse collection lorry, presently reverse up the street. There may be an increase in the number of large vehicles but this is not considered to be significant. The Council's Traffic and Road Safety team have raised no objections.
- 51 The applicant has offered to block off pedestrian access to the site from Newton Terrace in order to ensure there is no short cut through the site, thus, in his view, alleviating potential disturbance to residents in John Street and Newton Terrace. However, I am of the view that pedestrian access for residents of the development directly off Newton Terrace would be advantageous and moreover as the access would be on to a public area then there is unlikely to be any significant disturbance to residents as a result.

Waste Collection

- 52 The former bicycle shelter will be part used for bin storage. Bins would be presented for uplift on John Street once every two weeks. Provided that environmental health standards are maintained this should not pose an adverse amenity issue.

Drainage

- 53 No drainage issues have been raised. A more permeable surface to the existing tarmac playground would be encouraged as part of the landscaping scheme.

Economic Impact

- 54 Supporting information contained in the design statement provides an indication of the number of applicants on the housing list in Blairgowrie seeking one bedroom accommodation. The proposed scheme would provide 8 affordable dwellings thus making a contribution to the housing stock. The site is in a relatively central location within the town and in walking distance of town centre amenities. The development would provide a new use for a vacant building at risk.

Developer Contributions

- 55 The Council Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance requires a financial contribution towards increased primary school capacity in areas where a primary school capacity constraint has been identified. A capacity constraint is defined as where a primary school is operating, or likely to be operating following completion of the proposed development and extant planning

permissions, at or above 80% of total capacity. This proposal is within the catchment of Newhill Primary School.

- 56 Single bedroom dwellings are exempt from contributing towards primary education. The development consists of 1 studio and 7 one bedroom dwellings. On this basis no developer contributions are required in this case.
- 57 The Council's Affordable Housing Policy requires that 25% of the total number of houses, above a threshold of 5 units, for which planning consent is being sought is to be in the form of affordable housing. The affordable housing requirement from this proposal is 2 units ($8 \times 0.25 = 2$). From the submitted drawings it is apparent that all the units are very small, and therefore may be considered to be unsubsidised low cost housing for sale - entry level housing.
- 58 The Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance sets out:
"Houses which fall into the unsubsidised low cost housing for sale category are smaller less expensive houses generally for entry level which are sold without any subsidy or discount. These houses may be affordable simply due to their smaller size. PAN 2/2010 suggests that some form of legal agreement may be required to retain such houses as affordable in perpetuity. However, it is considered that there will generally always be a limit on what the resale price of such houses will be. If the Council are satisfied that on resale such properties will remain at an affordable price – allowing for inflation and taking into consideration the area in which the houses are – then it is likely that generally it will not be necessary to impose a condition in order to maintain the houses as affordable in perpetuity".
It is considered that in this case all the properties will remain at an affordable price on resale due to their size and location and therefore no condition is required.

LEGAL AGREEMENTS

- 59 No legal agreement is required.

DIRECTION BY SCOTTISH MINISTERS

- 60 Under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008, regulations 30 – 32 there have been no directions by the Scottish Government in respect of an Environmental Impact Assessment screening opinion, call in or notification relating to this application.

CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 61 In conclusion, the application must be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this respect, the proposal is considered to comply with the adopted Perth and Kinross Council Local Development Plan 2014. I have taken account of material considerations and find none that would justify overriding the adopted Development Plan. On that basis the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

A Approve the application subject to the following conditions and reasons:

- 1 The proposed development must be carried out in accordance with the approved plans herewith, unless otherwise provided for by conditions imposed on the planning consent.

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the plans approved.

- 2 Prior to commencement of development further design details, in the form of large scale (1:10 or 1:20) elevation and section drawings, to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council as Planning Authority:
 - I. New external doors and upper windows on the south-east elevation;
 - II. External access ramps.

Reason: to safeguard the character of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- 3 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, a detailed landscaping and planting scheme for the site shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Council as Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of all hard landscaping proposals including materials and installation methods and, species, height, size and density of trees and shrubs to be planted. The scheme as subsequently approved shall be carried out and completed within the first available planting season (October to March) after the completion or bringing into use of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing with this Planning Authority and the date of Practical Completion of the landscaping scheme shall be supplied in writing to the Council as Planning Authority within 7 days of that date. The scheme as agreed and implemented shall thereafter be maintained to the satisfaction of the Council as Planning Authority.

Reason - In the interests of visual amenity; to ensure a satisfactory standard of local environmental quality.

- 4 The existing pedestrian access to the site from Newton Terrace shall be retained for use by residents of the development.

Reason – In the interests of residential amenity and to ensure adequate pedestrian access is available.

B JUSTIFICATION

The proposal is considered to comply with the Development Plan and there are no other material considerations which would justify a departure therefrom.

C PROCEDURAL NOTES

None.

D INFORMATIVES

- 1 This planning permission will last only for three years from the date of this decision notice, unless the development has been started within that period. (See Section 58(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).
- 2 Under Section 27A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) the person undertaking the development is required to give the Planning Authority prior written notification of the date on which it is intended to commence the development. A failure to comply with this statutory requirement would constitute a breach of planning control under section 123(1) of that Act, which may result in enforcement action being taken.
- 3 As soon as practicable after the development is complete, the person who completes the development is obliged by Section 27B of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) to give the Planning Authority written notice of that position

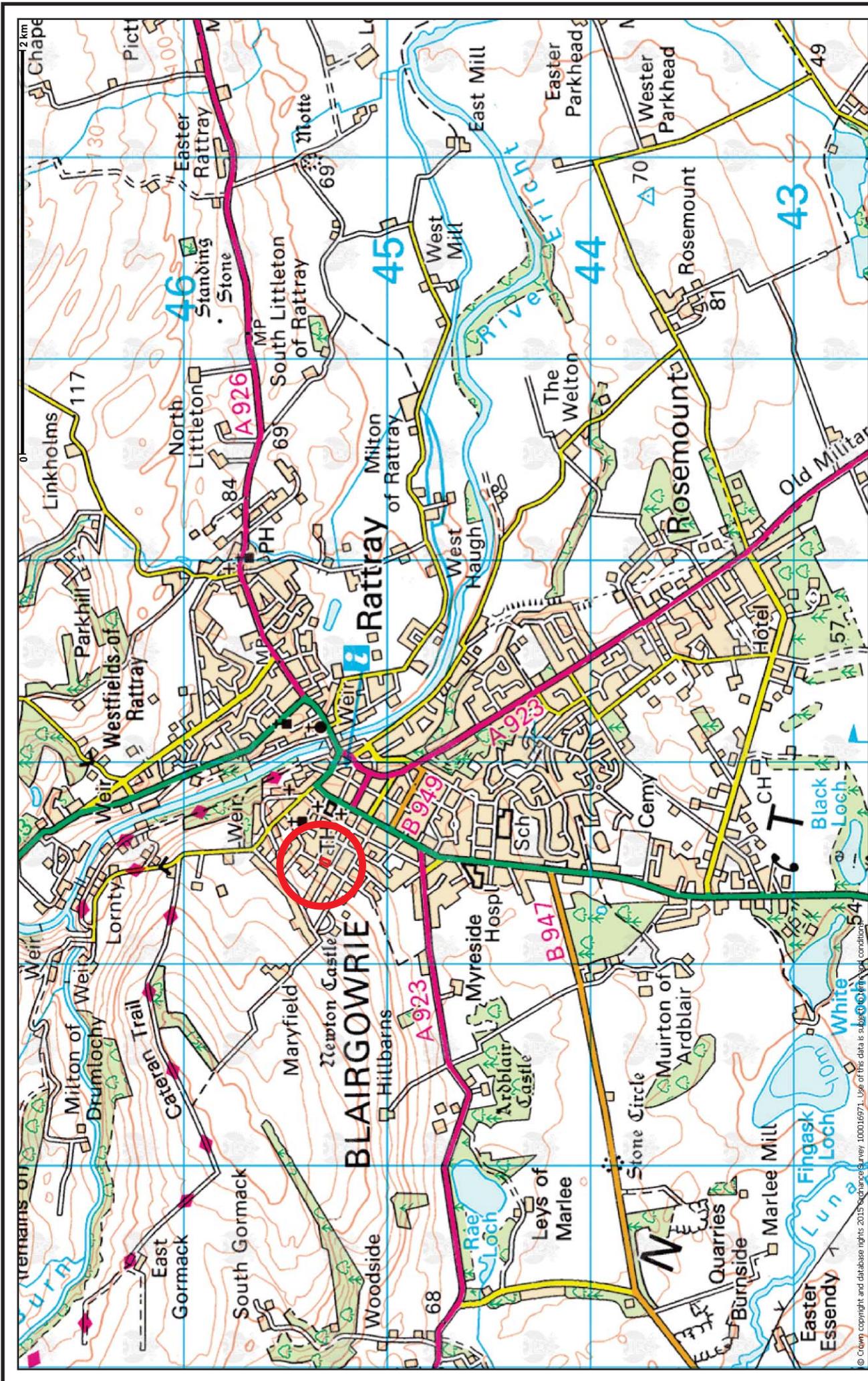
Background Papers: 11 letters of representation
Contact Officer: Richard Welch – Ext 76598
Date: 22 May 2015

NICK BRIAN DEVELOPMENT QUALITY MANAGER

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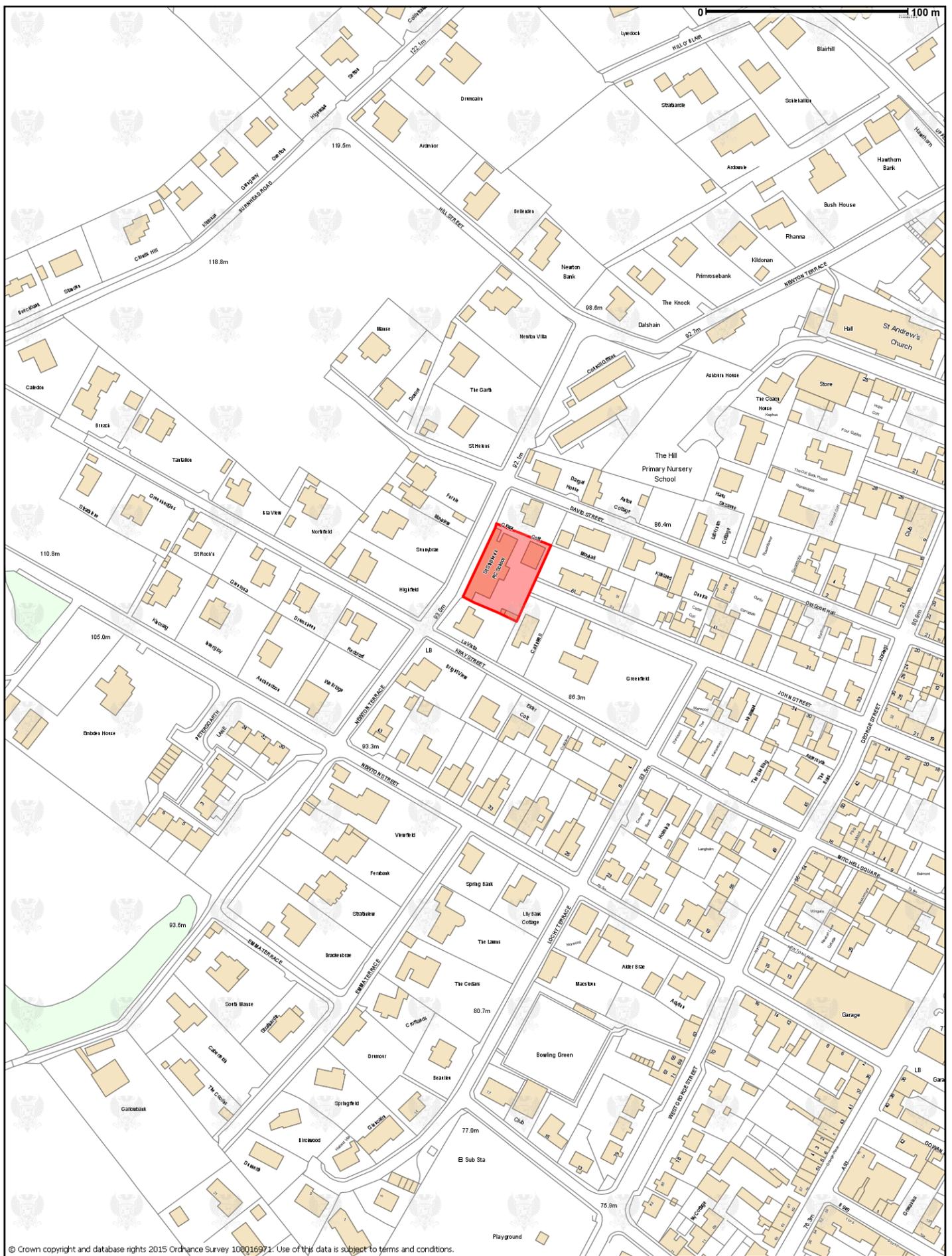
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Change of use and alterations from school to form 8 dwellingshouses at former St Stephens RC Primary School, John Street, Blairgowrie



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