



4<sup>th</sup> December 2013

The Head of Planning and Building Standards  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Montrose House  
154 Montrose Crescent  
Hamilton  
ML3 6LB

Dear Sirs,

**Application number : CL/13/0416.**

**Biggar Primary School South Back Road Biggar ML12 6AL**

**Demolition of existing primary school and sports hall and erection of replacement school with associated car park and landscaping.**

We have inspected this application and wish to comment as follows :

- In spite the centre of Biggar having a very significant built heritage, it does not appear to have full conservation area status. It is however managed through an Article 4 Directive, although this does not specifically consider historical context. This situation can be expected to taken to the next level at some time with a full conservation area assessment. Until that time, no buildings of historic interest in the town centre or closely related to it should be permitted to be demolished or drastically altered. The Council's own website refers to " The town has kept its medieval layout of a wide road running through the centre to allow markets and fairs to be held, with closes running to parallel back streets and buildings with long gardens" and this will inform they way a conservation will be interpreted. Conservation Areas are much more than street frontages along a main road and include the contextual environment around them.
- In 1999 a Commendation was awarded for the Biggar Town Centre Project. The school site is outwith, but near to the project area and contributes indirectly to the overall character. This commendation indicates a sensitive approach to date.
- The school forms an integral part of the Biggar Heritage Trail together with various other buildings including those across and down South Back Road which are listed "B" and "C". Both a modern replacement building and a parking lot would be very detrimental to the overall character of the whole streetscape.
- The "Biggar Community Strategy", supported amongst others by the South Lanarkshire Council, clearly identifies the character, (grain, scale, materials and

intimacy etc) wanted by the community for their town. The formal objections and those posted on social media reflect the reaction to the new proposals. This is not just sentimentality for the existing building, but a dread of loss of a building which contributes to the area and has become meaningful to the community.

- All historic buildings in such a built environments are important. They are historical and important as they reflect the way the town has evolved. They have retained a friendly urban texture within an urban realm.
- The existing school building has interesting triple gables facing South Back Street and other details. It should not be lost. Instead innovative alternative uses should be found for it, utilising its intrinsic characteristics.
- The proposals for the new school building is a related issue. The extremely dour and brutalist black industrial looking replacement proposals are of great concern to us. This does not appear to be at all suitable for a school and conflicts completely with the surrounding townscape. Token glass and minor coloured features do not relieve the harshness.
- The very proposal for a car park in this location indicates an increase in traffic flow into the back streets. This has been identified as a problem in previous studies as something which will not only negatively affect the immediate residents, but also the compact urban layout.
- Other alternatives for school facilities are available in close proximity.
- There must always be a presumption for retention of historic buildings unless it can be proved that all alternatives have been exhausted in terms of repair or sustainable usage or because other pressures such as spacial needs are unavoidable. None of these appear to apply to the current Biggar Primary School building.

We object to the proposal to demolish the existing school.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs) Audrey R Gardner,  
Chairman. Cases Panel. Strathclyde Group.