



Case information

Case ID	300009039
File Reference	HGH/B/CB/57
Name of Site	Former Sheriff Court, Hope Street, Falkirk

Local Authority	Falkirk Council		
National Grid Reference	NS 88564 80072		
Designation No. (if any)	LB31200		
Designation Type	Listed Building	Current Category of Listing	B
Case Type	Amendment		

Start Date	2014 [Former Scottish Court Houses listing review, 2014-16]
Decision Date	10/01/2017

1. Decision

In our current state of knowledge, 1 Hope Street, Falkirk continues to meet the criteria for listing. The statutory listing address and the listed building record has been amended. The category of listing remains at B.

Previous Statutory Address	Sheriff Court House Buildings, Hope Street and West Bridge Street
Amended Statutory Address	Former Sheriff Court including boundary walls, gatepiers and lamp stands, 1 Hope Street, Falkirk

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The Former Sheriff Court at Falkirk was listed at category B on 23/04/1979. It is situated within the Falkirk Conservation Area.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

1 Hope Street, Falkirk was considered for amendment as part of the Former Scottish Court Houses Listing Review 2014-16. The building was visited on 07/11/2014. The interior and exterior were seen.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The building was found to meet the criteria for listing.

An assessment against the listing criteria was carried out. See **Annex A**.

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 2, pp. 51-53.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Listing Criteria*

Former Sheriff Court including boundary walls, gatepiers and lamp stands, 1 Hope Street, Falkirk

1. Description

2-storey, attic and basement, Scots Baronial in style former sheriff court by Thomas Brown and James Maitland Wardrop dating from 1866-68 and situated on a prominent corner site (now a funeral directors premises, 2016). The building has crowstepped gables and a distinctive 4-stage circular tower with a tall candle-snuffer roof in a re-entrant angle on the east elevation. It is built in snecked rubble with a base course, continuous string course above the ground floor with hoodmoulding and has a cornice. Some of the first floor windows have pedimented or semi-circular dormerheads with carved panels depicting historical and armorial subjects. The windows to the former courtroom at the rear are round-arched.

The 4-bay entrance elevation faces west (Hope Street). Steps lead to an off-centre timber entrance door with a fanlight above, and which has a surrounding moulded doorpiece with carved panels above. The gabled bays on either side are slightly advanced and have stone-mullioned tripartite windows at the ground floor with carved panels above. The first floor windows are rectangular with cornices and strapwork details above. The far right bay is recessed and there is a corner turret with small, narrow window at the upper storey.

The 5-bay south elevation (West Bridge Street) is asymmetrical with a pair of near central gables. The gable to the left has a canted re-entrant angle with a timber door and a carved panel above. Above is a corbelled, square turret with a quatrefoil dummy gunloop and a bellcast candlesnuffer roof and spirelet. At the west end of the elevation is a studded door and high set small horizontal barred windows of the former ground floor cells.

The windows are mostly timber sash and case. The tripartite windows have a single pane over 2-pane glazing pattern and the rectangular windows have a 2-pane over 4-pane glazing pattern. There are grey slates to the roof and tall ashlar chimney stacks.

The interior was seen in 2014 and is arranged around a former courtroom at first floor. The courtroom has a timber hammerbeam ceiling. There is a fine, open-well stone stair with ornate iron balusters and at the first floor landing there are square urn balusters with large square newel posts. There is an ornate coved ceiling with a large rectangular lantern light over the stair. Some of the larger rooms have corncicing and carved fire surrounds.

There is a low coped boundary wall to the south and west. A pair of panelled gatepiers are situated in the boundary wall to the west and are topped by spiral metal lamp stands.

2. Assessment Against the Listing Criteria (HES Policy Statement, 2016) Annex 2, pp. 51-52

Criteria for determining whether a building is of 'special architectural or historic interest' for listing under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/9/contents]

To be listed, a building need not meet all the listing criteria. The criteria provide a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions.

2.1 Age and Rarity

Falkirk Sheriff Court was built between 1866 and 1868 at a cost of £7,000 and replaced a number of temporary premises. When built, the court house contained a courtroom, associated rooms and cells as shown in plans from 1864 by Wardrop and Brown (Canmore ID 221579). The building is described in the Falkirk Herald of 15 October 1868 as being 'ample and elegant' with 'numerous turrets and crow-step gables which....greatly enhance the general effect'. A police station wing was added to the south elevation in 1870 and was demolished before 1969. A second courtroom was added in the late 1970s. A new courthouse was built in Falkirk and opened in 1990 and consequently this one at Hope Street was closed. The building is now used by a funeral directors firm.

The development of the court house as a building type in Scotland follows the history of the Scottish legal system and wider government reforms. The majority of purpose-built court houses were constructed in the 19th century as by this time there was an increase in the separation of civic, administrative and penal functions into separate civic and institutional buildings, and the resultant surge of public building was promoted by new institutional bodies. The introduction of the Sheriff Court Houses (Scotland) Act of 1860 gave a major impetus to the increase and improvement of court accommodation and this provision of central funding was followed by the most active period of sheriff court house construction in the history of the Scottish legal system and many new court houses were built or reworked after this date.

Court houses constructed post 1860 generally had a solely legal purpose and did not incorporate a prison, other than temporary holding cells. The courts were designed in a variety of architectural styles many relying heavily on Scots Baronial features to reference the fortified Scottish building tradition. Newly constructed court buildings in the second half of the 19th century dispensed with large public spaces such as county halls and instead provided bespoke office accommodation for the sheriff, judge and clerks, and accommodating the numerous types of court and holding cells.

The former Sheriff Court at Falkirk is a well-detailed example of a Scots Baronial court house with elaborate stone detailing and high quality decorative features to the interior (see Architectural and Historic Interest section below). As the design dates from 1868 it is among the first phase of sheriff court buildings to be designed and built after the 1860 Act, a significant period of court house building in Scotland.

2.2 Architectural or Historic Interest

Interior

Courts were often highly decorated buildings in keeping with them being high status civic buildings and although no longer functioning as a court, much of the mid-19th century decorative scheme remains at the former Falkirk Sheriff Court building. The imposing timber hammerbeam roof in the former courtroom has some fine decorative detailing, particularly in the brackets. The ornate balusters in the main staircase make this feature a focal point in the building. The detailing to the ancillary rooms and circulation spaces is typical for its date. The basement level has retained the former cells and these are now used as storage.

Plan form

The layout of the interior rooms has retained much of its 19th century plan. Placing offices around a central first floor courtroom is standard for a court house. The building was extended by the addition of the Police Station wing in 1870, which was demolished before 1969. With the exception of the loss of the police station the building largely retains the same footprint as that shown on the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1898.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

As prime civic buildings courts usually have a significant amount of decorative work on the exterior. The former Falkirk Sheriff Court is no exception to this with carved stonework details particularly to its street elevations, which have been largely unaltered since the mid-19th century. This detailing includes elaborately carved panels above the windows, a prominent circular tower and crowstepped gables. The features of this style were reminiscent of those used in traditional fortified Scots building and are therefore highly appropriate for the use in a building connected with law and justice.

Thomas Brown and James Maitland Wardrop formed a prolific and highly successful architectural firm based in Edinburgh. Thomas Brown II (1806-circa 1872) began his architectural career in his father's firm. He probably worked in the office of William Burn prior to being appointed as architect to the Prison Board of Scotland in 1837 and setting up his own independent office in Edinburgh. James Maitland Wardrop (1823-1882) was articled to Thomas Brown, becoming a partner in the practice in 1849. As architect to the Prison Board of Scotland, Brown had extensive experience in designing county court houses and prisons, the design work of which Wardrop gradually took over, including the court houses of Alloa (1863. Listed at category B, LB20970), Forfar (1869. Listed at category B, LB31609) and Stirling (designed 1866, built 1874. Listed at category B, LB41108). The practice were also highly successful at remodelling and designing country houses, with their work accomplished examples of the Franco-Baronial style and later pioneering examples of neo-Georgian. Their Franco-Baronial style was undoubtedly influenced from previously working in the office of David Bryce, and Wardrop became a serious rival to him.

Setting

The former court building is prominently sited at a corner junction of Hope Street and West Bridge Street at the west end of Falkirk town centre. It is a bold and somewhat isolated example of Victorian public architecture in this part of Falkirk. The scale of the building, including the round tower and its high quality stonework detailing is indicative of an important civic building. It is situated in the Falkirk Conservation Area.

Regional variations

There are no known regional variations.

2.3 Close Historical Associations

There are no known associations with a person or event of national importance at present (2016).

3. Working with the Principles of Listing (HES Policy Statement, 2016) Annex 2, pp. 53

In choosing buildings within the above broad headings particular attention is paid to:

- a. special value within building types*
- b. contribution to an architecturally or historically interesting group*
- c. the impact of a grouping of buildings*
- d. authenticity*

When working with the principles of listing the Former Falkirk Sheriff Court has particular interest under a and d.

- a. The former Falkirk Sheriff court is a good example of mid-19th century court building, in the newly popular Scots Baronial style.
- d. The street elevations have been little altered since their completion in 1868 and the interior has retained much of its 19th century decorative features.

4. Summary of Assessment Against the Listing Criteria**

The former Falkirk Sheriff Court is a significant and imposing example of civic architecture and forms a focal point in the streetscape of Falkirk town centre. Designed by the prolific court architects Brown and Wardrop, it is elaborately detailed with carved stonework to the exterior, including in panels above the windows and pediments, and has distinctive architectural features such as the round tower with tall candle-snuffer roof and shaped pedimented dormerheads. The interior is also of high quality, retaining much of its mid-19th century decorative scheme, including finely detailed timberwork in the former courtroom and a well-detailed staircase.

In our current state of knowledge it continues to meet the criteria for listing.

5. Category of Listing

Categories of listing are non-statutory and buildings are assigned a category (A, B or C) according to their relative importance following the assessment against the criteria for listing.

Category definitions are found at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>

Category B is for buildings of regional or more than local importance, or major examples of some particular period, style or building type. The former Falkirk Sheriff Court has a wealth of decorative detail to its exterior and some good internal details and is a prominent building in the centre of Falkirk. Its interest in listing terms is considered to be of regional importance and therefore category B is the most appropriate category of listing.

6. Other Information

N/A

7. References

Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 221579

Maps

Ordnance Survey (Surveyed 1896, Published 1898) Stirlingshire Sheet 030.03. 25 Inches to the Mile map. 2nd Edition. Southampton: Ordnance Survey.

Printed Sources

The Builder (20 January 1866) *From Scotland, Falkirk*. Volume 24. p.45.

Falkirk Herald (15 October 1868) *The New Sheriff Court Buildings*. p.5.

Gifford, J. and Walker, F. A. (2002) *Buildings of Scotland: Stirling and Central Scotland*. Yale University Press. p.472.

Jacques, R. (2001). *Falkirk and District*. Edinburgh: RIAS. p.23

The Scottish Civic Trust (1983) *Historic Buildings at Work*. Glasgow: Scottish Civic Trust. p.8.

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Dictionary of Scottish Architects. *Falkirk Courthouse* at http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/building_full.php?id=200794 (accessed 03/11/2014).

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<http://www.falkirklocalhistorysociety.co.uk/gallery/index.php?txtMode=view&cid=2&pid=62> [accessed 06/09/2016].

Historic Scotland (2014) *Scottish Courts Preliminary Report* at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/media/3337/scottish-courts-preliminary-report.pdf> [accessed 06/09/2016].

* This assessment is based on our current state of knowledge and has been prepared for the purpose of consultation or to provide a view on the special interest of a building. This assessment is a consultation document and will form the basis of any new or updated listed building record should the structure be listed. The content of this assessment may change to take into account further information received as a result of the consultation process.

** A building may be found to meet the listing criteria but in some circumstances may not be added to the list. See 'When might Historic Environment Scotland list a building' at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/what-is-listing/>