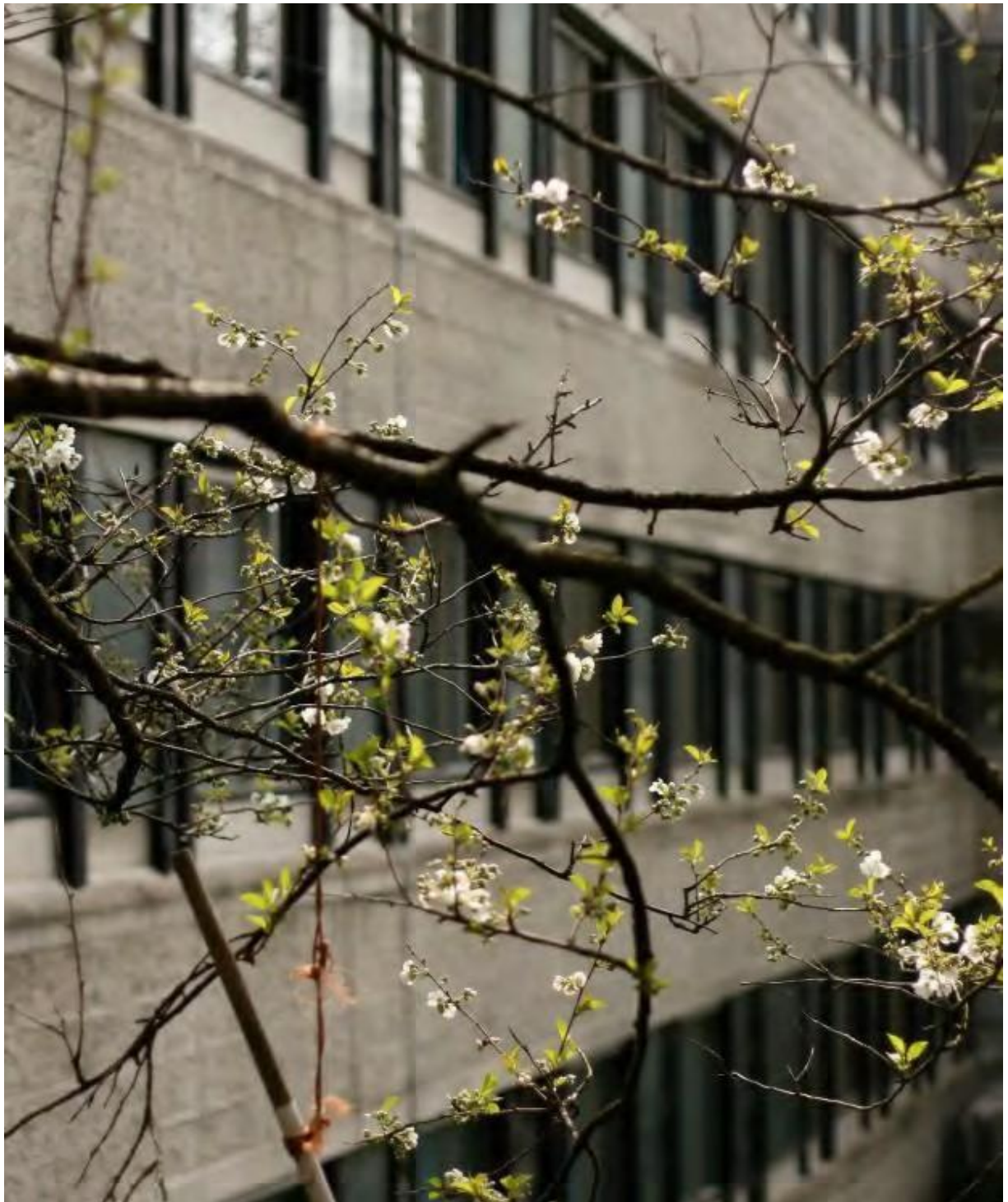


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# THE UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING CAMPUS

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## Conservation Plan

*Simpson & Brown Architects*

October 2009

#### 4.4 Character Area 4: Sports Area

**4.4.1 Historical Development** The Sports Area was part of the parkland of the estate, bounded to the west by the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century stone boundary wall.

Historic OS maps show woodland on the same site as the present trees.

The area was among the earliest to be developed by the new university.



**Figure 214** Character Area 4, site plan



**Figure 215** Aerial view of the sports area c1967, prior to construction of central area UoSA





**Figure 216** Aerial view of sports area 1972 UoSA

The sports facilities are promoted by the university. This identifies how important such facilities are in attracting students. However the sports facilities are not merely for recreational purposes: sport is one of the five key academic subject areas and *'The Department of Sports Studies was ranked 1st in Scotland and 5th in the UK in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise with 85% of our research outputs classed as of international standard'*<sup>1</sup>. Stirling was also the first university in Scotland to make its facilities available to the general public, further enhancing integration with the local area - in 2004, two-thirds of users were from the wider community<sup>2</sup>.

In 2008, the First Minister, Alex Salmond announced that *'the University of Stirling will become Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence [which] will act as the hub of a national network of universities and colleges providing training and support for Scotland's best athletes.'*<sup>3</sup>

The University has produced an impressive list of competitors in a variety of sports: 85 junior and senior internationalists and 35 national champions<sup>4</sup>. *i Gannochy Trust Pavilion, 1970*



**Figure 217** East elevation of Gannochy Trust Pavilion. Note the closed blinds on the upper level, the car parking and the fenced off tennis courts in front.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sports.stir.ac.uk>, accessed 22-Apr-09

<sup>2</sup> UoS Press Release, 19-Oct-2004

<sup>3</sup> Speech to the Scottish Parliament, 14-May-2008, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>, accessed 22-Apr-09

<sup>4</sup> Sports Studies Factsheet, <http://www.sports.stir.ac.uk>, accessed 22-Apr-09

This sports pavilion, named after the Gannochy Trust that donated £100,000 towards the University Appeal, was designed by the architects Reiach and Hall. Alan Reiach was a close contemporary of Robert Matthew, and although not quite so prolific, created a practice that was renowned for its contribution to modernism in Scotland (see 3.11). The practice continues today. The pavilion was opened in 1970, concurrent with the first of the student residences, central area and teaching block that catered for the Phase 2 expansion.

The Pavilion as originally built provided limited, but crucial, facilities – changing rooms for outdoor sports on the lower level, with a recreation and bar space above opening out on to a terrace with panoramic views of the playing fields.



The materials used on the building include Flagreca cladding panels on the overhanging roof slab and black-stained timber windows, neatly tying the building into the rest of the campus. A red brick was used for the lower of the pavilion UoSA level which highlighted the prominence of the elegant upper level. The changing rooms at the lower level were lit by a narrow band of clerestory windows, with larger windows at either end which provided a pleasing balance to the composition of the façade. The pavilion was an exceptionally well designed and well thought through building.

Further expansion was always expected once funds allowed, as shown in drawings of the anticipated centre from 1968/69 (figure 220). However, the nature of this expansion was not clearly set out from the start, with the further phases of the Sport Centre development undergoing a number of schematic alternatives. Despite its smaller size, the pavilion was clearly intended to be the focal point for the sports area: the various proposals for further expansion, and the buildings as built by Reiach and Hall, were subservient to and clearly distinct from the pavilion.

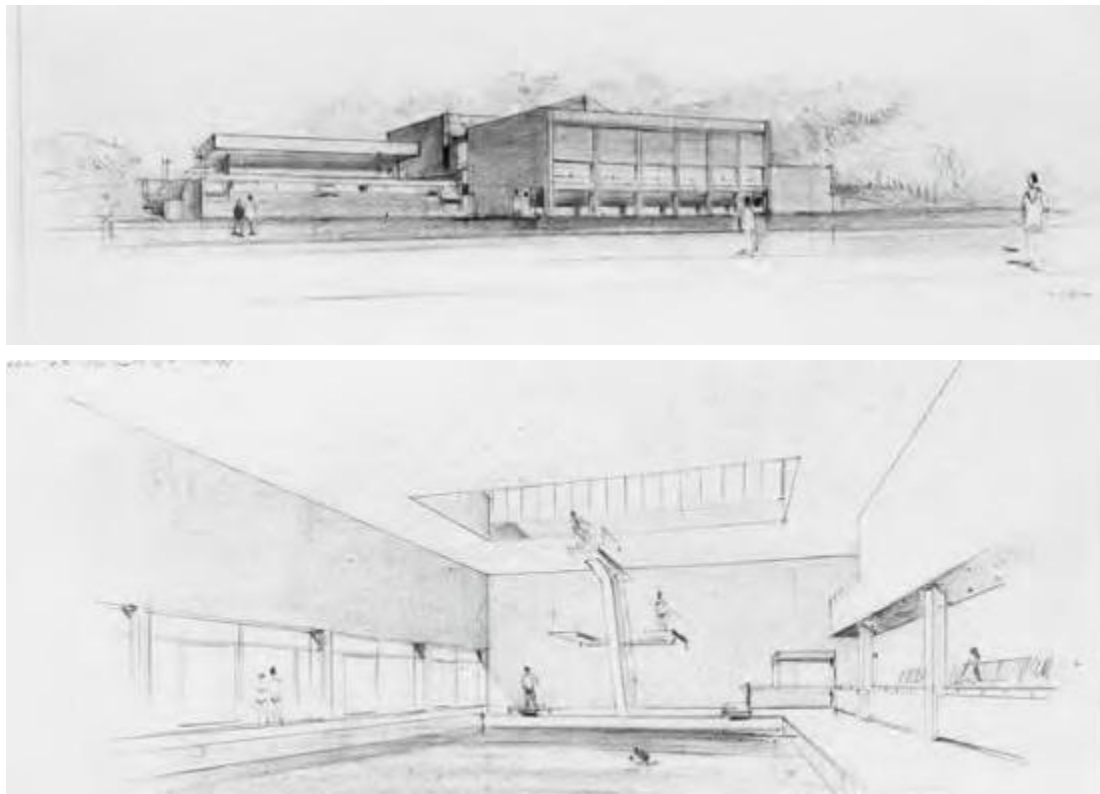


**Figure 219** Gannochy Trust Pavilion with phase 2 swimming pool behind, and separate squash courts block on the right. Note the busy terrace of the pavilion. UoSA

The pavilion continues to be used for sporting use. However in 2006 the recreation and bar space on the upper level was converted for use as a multi-purpose studio<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *Stirling Minds*, Issue 16, Autumn 2006, p3

The area in front of the pavilion is used for car parking and the outdoor tennis courts built in front of this have been fenced off with full-height wire mesh, meaning the pavilion building is no longer related to the space it overlooks. Coupled with the fact that the previously thriving terrace is no longer used, and the unfortunate appearance of the closed blinds on the studio windows (presumably for privacy) the use of the pavilion appears to be different from the original intention. *ii Gannochy Sports Centre, 1973-80*



**Figure 220** Sketch perspectives of proposed phase 2 and phase 3 buildings of the Sports Centre by Alan Reiach. Note the pavilion shown top-left. The final design had a simpler swimming pool, without the diving board shown, built to the rear, with the games hall in front *RCAHMS*

The drawings from 1968 show a straightforward proposal for the Sport Centre – a broadly symmetrical north-south composition with equal sized swimming pool area and games hall to the east and west respectively, with a smaller hall adjoining at the south. The swimming pool was clearly marked at this early stage as the second phase, with the games hall to follow after.

By May 1969, Alan Reiach had reworked the scheme with the swimming pool relocated to the playing fields side, and the games hall behind. A sub-dividable ‘activity room’ was located at the south end. The slope of the ground meant that the floor level around the swimming pool was at the same height as the games hall – with the central reception area planned to connect to the upper level of the Pavilion. Sketch perspectives by Alan Reiach show a colonnaded front to the playing fields for the swimming pool with a large mono-pitch rooflight raised above the main roofline to allow for a diving board (figure 220). The elaborate appearance and detailing of this scheme was scaled back by the following year as budget constraints became more apparent: all the designs from April 1970 were considerably plainer.

In the April 1970 designs the proposed swimming pool was relocated to the rear of the site, with the games hall on the lower playing fields side. The inclusion of squash courts is first seen in the plans from May of the same year, with plans showing options of three squash courts on the north side of the games hall, or four to the south. All the plans from these dates show the changing rooms at the higher level to the north of the swimming pool, with one set of plans even including a small caretaker's flat at the south end.

These more detailed drawings clearly delineate the phasing of the proposed centre – the phase 1 Pavilion was by then complete, phase 2 comprised the administrative offices, reception and a weights room on the lower (ground) level, with changing rooms, small studio and the swimming pool on the upper level. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor walkway connecting to the Pavilion was included in this phase. Also included was the squash courts block containing three courts. This phase was completed in 1973.



**Figure 221** Gannochy Sports Centre swimming pool, since converted for use as a fitness suite *UoSA*.



**Figure 222** Oblique aerial views showing the development of the Gannochy Sports Centre. The image on the left is post-1973 showing the swimming pool and squash courts building. The image on the right, post-1980, shows the addition of the games hall. *UoSA*

The subsequent phase with the large and small halls in front of the phase 2 buildings was not completed until 1980. The planned incorporation of the squash courts into the main body of the building by adding a further five courts and a connecting corridor at first floor level was not built, and the three phase 2 squash courts remained separate.



iii *Gannochy Tennis Centre, 1991*



**Figure 223** Gannochy Tennis Centre 2009

The Gannochy Tennis Centre was opened in 1991 by HRH, Princess of Wales. The building is a straight-forward industrial-style building in two-tone brick with metal cladding and roof in dark green. It houses four indoor tennis courts.

iv *Robertson Trust Swimming Pool/National Swimming Academy, 2002*



**Figure 224** North elevation of the National Swimming Academy building.

In 2002 the University opened the new £6.4m six-lane 50 metre Robertson Trust Swimming Pool, housed in a new building immediately north of the Gannochy Trust Pavilion. The 1973 swimming pool was subsequently floored and converted into a fitness centre. The building, which houses the Scottish National Swimming Academy, was designed by Faulkner Browns Architects in 2000<sup>6</sup>. Faulkner Browns have designed a number of similar buildings including the Aquatics Centre for the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002, and the refurbishment and extension of the University of Edinburgh's sports buildings at St Leonards Land<sup>7</sup>. The form of the building is dominated by the roof that sweeps up over the building in a single pitch before curving round on the rear elevation.

<sup>6</sup> Planning application submitted to Stirling Council in May 2000

<sup>7</sup> [www.faulknerbrowns.co.uk](http://www.faulknerbrowns.co.uk) & [www.edinburgharchitecture.co.uk](http://www.edinburgharchitecture.co.uk), both accessed 31-Mar-2009

This project was a conversion and extension of the 1991 Tennis Centre. The architects Faulkner Browns, who had designed the National Swimming Academy building submitted proposals for the Tennis Centre for planning in 2003, but the project was ultimately carried out by Burnett Pollock Associates who submitted their own application a year later. The project involved an extension largely similar in massing to the 1991 Tennis Centre, but with a more streamlined and modern appearance with cladding materials in a similar colour to that used by the same architects on the recladding of the Cottrell Building. Two additional outdoor clay courts were also added, bringing the total number of tennis courts to 10. The £1.3m project attracted a grant of £500,000 from the National Lottery<sup>8</sup>, awarded by SportScotland. *vi Craig Gowans Football Centre, 2008*



**Figure 225** Craig Gowans Football Centre with both Tennis Centre buildings behind 2009

Built on the site of the former outdoor tennis courts, the football centre is the training facility for Falkirk Football Club. The £900,000 building was designed by McEachern and MacDuff as a two-storey asymmetrical block immediately to the south of the indoor tennis centre extension of 2006. This south block, white-rendered with a grey metal roof that matches that of the tennis centre and houses offices, changing rooms, physiotherapy space and a players' lounge.

#### **4.4.2 Character Assessment**

This is a flat area to the south of the main entrance and the Pathfoot building. The pitches for football and rugby are along the west side of the site with a running track at the south west corner. The sports buildings are along the eastern edge of this area tucked in under a bank rising towards the car parks to the west of the Cottrell Building. The first building on the site was the sports pavilion. This small building was originally intended to be the first part of a three phase building but has been extended massively beyond its original extent.

The buildings are grouped fairly tightly together to allow the maximum space for the outdoor pitches in the western part. The original building is slightly to the north of the centre of this linear group. It is a sports pavilion very much derived in style from the architecture of Pathfoot. The design of the overhanging concrete band is very

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk>, accessed 22-Apr-09



similar to Pathfoot and this is an interesting instance of the initial Stirling University house style developed by RMJM at Pathfoot being interpreted by another architect for other Stirling University buildings. The architecture is developed slightly from the Pathfoot arrangement with curtain wall glazed corners to the south west and north west. The pavilion was originally intended to have views surveying the whole area of the sports pitches. The original design of this pavilion is very elegant with a symmetrical front facing east around the central door. The symmetry was not exact. It was interrupted to form bays underneath the eastern two thirds of the north side where the glazing has been brought out to just behind the plane of the concrete cornice band. The curtain wall glazing is recessed at the north west corner so that the main face westwards towards the sports pitch is also symmetrically arranged. The door and division of glazing is slightly irregular.

The condition of this building is not particularly good. There is timber decay in the structural framework at first floor level and some cracks are visible in the joints at the cornice band. Various repairs have been made in bitumen or by fixing on additional timber but these have been done in a rather ad hoc manner. It seems that the earlier colour of the joinery at first floor level was black which also fits in with the house style established for the Pathfoot building. Some glazed panels have now been covered with board and other sheets of glass have been damaged and filled up behind with block work. The brick parapets to the east and west have either been extended upwards or had to be rebuilt. The concrete parapets to the stair near the north west corner are in quite poor condition with some concrete spalling and moss at the head of the wall.



**Figure 226** View north to Pathfoot from Character Area 4 2009

At the plinth level, the architecture is again at its most elegant facing west with a clerestory band immediately under the band of concrete which imitates the style established at Pathfoot. The material of the lower part is a light orange brickwork. At the north west corner is a concrete stair which was probably intended to be freestanding and would be an elegant design, but its impact has been reduced by the store which has been fitted beneath it. A service building to the north east also detracts

from the purity of the arrangement. Around the first floor pavilion level there is paving which might not be the original paving and which is in fairly poor condition and is ponding in many places.

The subsequent phases of building were built to the south of the original pavilion. At least in the entrance link block between the original pavilion and department of sports studies building, the original architecture of concrete cornice bands was continued. The main building to the south has less architectural distinction, even though the colour of brick and extended narrow clerestory bands have been repeated. The eastern side of this building is screened by bank and trees. The main sports hall block does have considerable architectural ambition with a long band of metal framed glazing underneath a concrete cornice band. The western side of this original building has been extended massively beyond its original footprint. In the later buildings function and cost has been more important than appearance. Roughly the same colour of brick has been used but the block has been designed with considerably less architectural ambition than the original pavilion.

There are further blocks containing squash and tennis courts to the west and to the south west. These are functional sheds. The southernmost building is the football centre. This is a contemporary building built with render with a sheeted front edge, apparently to refer to the larger sheeted shed to the north which contains tennis courts.



**Figure 227** Gannochy Pavilion and tennis courts 2009

The Scottish National Tennis Centre at the north of this western run of buildings is the least attractive and least architecturally distinguished of any of the buildings in this character area. It presents a blank face to the pitches with the token patterning in the brickwork and a sheeted band near the roof which has a number of dents and bashes in it. Water is overflowing from the northern end of the western gutter.

The relationship between the Alan Reiach Pavilion and the sports pitches has been reduced by clay court, tennis courts and parking. To some extent this is an understandable and reasonable development of the land around the original building but the hedge between the clay courts and the original pavilion does work in the opposite way in landscape terms to the original intention of the pavilion.

To the north of the original Pavilion is the National Swimming Academy. This is a building of considerably greater architectural ambition than the tennis and squash courts. The care taken with this design is fortunate given the prominence of this building on the route from the main vehicular entrance to the campus. The architecture is white painted render with grey around the windows and boarded panels on the side facing westwards. To the east part is the pool area which is enclosed within an elegant shape formed by a curving sheeted roof. The building is a skilful design in that it produces an elegant shape which is very suitable for its function but uses inexpensive materials. The purity of this design should be respected. It may be difficult to extend in a satisfactory manner to the north, south or east. A westwards extension is possible but the designer should be careful to follow the original architectural aesthetic of the building.

The character of this group of buildings is functional rather than aesthetic. In the area in general, the wide flat area of sports pitches with beech hedges and bank of trees to east and west provides an effective buffer between the campus buildings and the area beyond. The original intention was a much more open area with most sports being outside. The original pavilion would have been a much more prominent focus on the eastern side of the sports pitches but this context has largely been lost in development, particularly to the south west. There is no point in trying or expecting to reclaim this lost prominence for the original pavilion.

The National Swimming Academy is a good building and indicative of the university's commitment to architectural quality.

The trees are important to this character area. There are mature trees to the western boundary and to the southern half of the eastern boundary. To the south eastern part of the site is attractive woodland which contains some remnants of estate paths.



**Figure 228** Woodland and boundary wall to **Figure 229** Woodland above CA4 2009 west of CA4 2009

Views from the site are relatively restricted by these banks of trees. To the south, the villa which now forms the Scottish Institute of Sport is visible through the trees and fences around the football pitches. To the north are views of the Pathfoot building with fields and trees behind. Views towards Pathfoot are restricted by the fences around the artificial football pitches and by some semi-mature trees. However, the Pathfoot building does look well in its setting when seen from the centre of this character area.



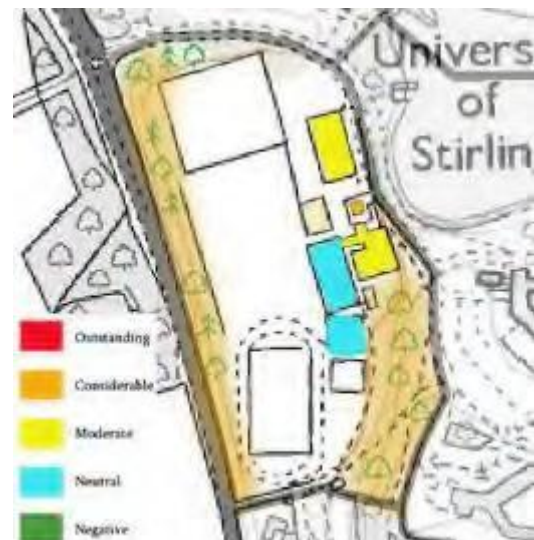
#### 4.4.3 Assessment of Significance

The Alan Reiach Gannochy Trust Pavilion has significance aesthetically. The National Swimming Academy is possibly too new to make a judgement on aesthetic and historical significance but could be regarded to have moderate significance, not least a result of its prominence at the entrance to the university campus. The other buildings are neutral in aesthetic terms although clearly very important and practical education buildings, and therefore they have social significance.

The belt of planting to the west of this area and the boundary wall are both of considerable landscape significance and provide an attractive buffer between this area and the main public road. The woodland to the east of this area is also of considerable significance as surviving policy woodland.



**Figure 230** Character Area 4, site plan showing views



**Figure 231** Character Area 4, site plan showing significance

#### 4.4.4 Recommendations

Whilst it would be ideal if the fabric of the Gannochy Trust Pavilion could be repaired it is recognised that there is pressure to redevelop this plot in order to further the University's role as a centre of sporting excellence. It is also recognised that the building has been altered and a suitable use has not been found - as a result the Estate Strategy has earmarked the building for demolition and replacement.

In designing a replacement building for this location, care should be taken to use the quality of Alan Reiach's design as a benchmark, and recognise the potential of the existing design to influence that of the replacement in its function as a high-quality 'hub' at the heart of the sports area. Mitigative measures prior to the demolition of the building should include a full recording exercise of the building (photographic and measured survey). Contact with a member of the original design team might also be possible, which would assist in recording the original design intentions.

Further development in this character area would be best placed to the west of the 1991 tennis centre, allowing continued use of the playing fields to the north and the running track to the south. Development in this location would also disguise the inappropriately blank elevation of the tennis centre, and offer the potential to improve upon the currently limited, and architecturally detrimental, parking facilities.