



Expert Witness Statement

**Proposed Residential Development off Hinckley Road, Barwell
for Barwell Capitol Limited**

Introduction and Experience

My name is Jason Ridgway, and I have over 35 years of experience in architectural design within the national housebuilding industry. I began my career in private practice while completing my studies, before moving into a Design Management role with several well-known residential developers.

In 2001, I established my own architectural consultancy, through which I have continued to deliver comprehensive successful design solutions across all areas of residential development. My extensive experience provides me with a thorough understanding of the requirements needed to create successful, modern housing schemes.

I produce a wide range of design outputs, including masterplanning, feasibility studies, planning applications, detailed technical design, and project management. Since founding my consultancy, I have worked on approximately 400 residential projects many of which are complete.

Qualifications

- ONC in Building Studies (Wolverhampton University)
- HNC in Building Studies (Wolverhampton University)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Urban Design and Masterplanning (Nottingham Trent University)
- Member of CIAT

Instruction

Barwell Capitol Limited has instructed me to act as an expert witness to review the design solution for the proposed residential development off Hinckley Road, Barwell. I have been specifically appointed to provide independent commentary on the design aspects of the 124 plot site, irrespective of the individual planning applications. My commentary will be based on:

Drawing No: A951 – 005 – Revision P

The Rev P plan (A951 – 005 – P) was produced after the Wheatcroft consultation in order to reflect a change in the tenure of two plots (plots 120 and 121) from market to affordable. There has been no change in the layout or design of the Appeal Scheme from the Rev N (A951 – 005 – N) version of the Layout Plan and the Revision P Layout Plan (A951 – 005 – P) which is requested for approval through this Appeal.

Investigation

The formal planning applications for the development of the site were lodged with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council in late 2023. The Local Planning Authority refused the planning applications in July 2025.

Reason 2.

When taken together as a whole, the revised layout and increased density of applications 23/01175/FUL, 23/01177/FUL, 23/01184/FUL and 23/01186/FUL results in poor design by virtue of an unadoptable internal road layout and a lack of usable open space. This causes three issues, insufficient on-site open space, waste collection issues by virtue of refuse vehicles being unable to access the substandard internal roads of the site, and potentially unsustainable management liabilities for future occupiers. The applicant is unwilling to agree S106 contributions for the off-site provision of casual informal and natural green space; the applicant has also failed to provide conceptual details of the future management of the site's open space, roads and footpath and waste collection. The schemes are therefore contrary to Policies DM10 and DM17 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2016), to the Council's Good Design Guide and to key paragraphs 129, 135 and 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Design Issues from Reason 2

When taken together as a whole, the revised layout and increased density of applications results in poor design by virtue of an unadoptable internal road layout and a lack of usable open space. This causes three issues,

- i. Insufficient on-site open space,
- ii. waste collection issues by virtue of refuse vehicles being unable to access the substandard internal roads of the site
- iii. potentially unsustainable management liabilities for future occupiers.
- iv. Contrary to Policy DM10
- v. Contrary to Policy DM17
- vi. Contrary to National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraph 129
- vii. Contrary to National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraph 135
- viii. Contrary to National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraph 139

Opinion

In my assessment, Reason for Refusal 2 lacks sufficient specificity; however, I would welcome the opportunity to examine each of the design matters referenced above in further detail.

i) **Increased Density**

The modest increase in site density does not, in my view, result in poor design.

The layout demonstrates sound urban design principles, meets and in many cases exceeds the Council's space standards, and provides ample opportunities for landscaping. Policy 16 requires that development in Barwell should achieve a minimum net density of 40 dwellings per hectare.

Paragraph 125 of the NPPF further advises that planning policies and decisions should seek to secure multiple benefits from land in both urban and rural areas, and should promote the effective use of under-utilised land, particularly where this would help to meet identified housing needs in areas where land supply is constrained.

ii) **Insufficient on-site open space,**

The development frontage is set back from Hinckley Road to respect the existing street character and established building line. This frontage also incorporates an open area accommodating a sustainable drainage pond.

The areas of Open Space are detailed on the Overall POS Area Plan (Drawing No: A951-018-Rev E) these areas are as follows:

1. Accessible Natural Green Space – 5078 sqm
2. Natural Green Space – 508 sqm (4960 sqm)
3. Casual / Informal Space – 2159 sqm (2083)
4. LEAP – 450 sqm (446)

The applications relating to the eastern portion of the site will be subject to a financial contribution towards the off-site provision of green space. It should also be noted that the eastern field provides an important landscape buffer along its western boundary, as illustrated on the submitted Drawing No. A951-031.

iii) **Waste collection issues by virtue of refuse vehicles being unable to access the substandard internal roads of the site**

The site layout shown on Drawing No. A951-005-Revision P, has been subject to a review process and has been subtly adjusted to meet adoptable and more technical standards. The layout provides detailed highway dimensions demonstrating that the road network can be constructed to adoptable standards. The vehicle tracking confirms that both refuse vehicles and fire appliances are able to access and exit all areas of the development in a forward gear, regardless of whether the roads are privately maintained or adopted. The layout also identifies bin collection points (BCPs) where necessary, all of which provide appropriate distances for both refuse collection operatives and residents.

iv) Potential unsustainable liabilities for future occupiers.

It is intended for the highways to be adopted (subject to Leicestershire County Council approval) Any private areas that remain will form part of a management company that residents will contribute towards. This is a very common and accepted arrangement in modern residential development.

v) Contrary to Policy DM10 – Development and Design

a) The proposed scheme will not have a significant adverse impact on the privacy or amenity of nearby residents.

b) There are no activities in the immediate vicinity of the site that would negatively affect the amenity of future occupiers. The site is bounded by existing residential development to the north and east, with open fields to the south and west.

c) The proposed development represents a natural outward extension of the existing settlement and delivers a well-proportioned layout with dwellings of an appropriate scale that reflect the character of the local area. Barwell does not exhibit a single, distinct vernacular style; instead, it comprises a variety of architectural forms that share traditional materials and design characteristics. The proposed development draws upon these features while establishing a coherent character and sense of place.

d) The proposed external materials—anticipated to include red multi/buff facing brickwork, grey/brown roof tiles, and areas of render—are consistent with those found within the surrounding area.

e) It is anticipated that a detailed landscaping scheme will be secured by condition and will accord with *The Good Design Guide*.

f) All plots will be equipped with provision for electric vehicle charging points and will be constructed in accordance with current building regulations to ensure a high standard of energy efficiency.

g) All plots will include provision for the installation of an electric vehicle charging point.

h) The scheme incorporates sustainable drainage (SuDS) features, including a balancing pond located in the northeast corner of the site. Hard landscaping has been minimised where practical, with porous and soft-landscaped areas introduced adjacent to roads and driveways.

i) The layout maximises natural surveillance through the application of sound urban design principles, including the use of dual-aspect plots at road and private-drive junctions. Each dwelling benefits from clear surveillance of its own parking area and, to an appropriate extent, those of nearby properties, without compromising residential amenity.

vi) Contrary to Policy DM17 – Highways and Transportation

Leicestershire County Council Highways did not raise any objection to the Site Layout presented on Drawing No: A951 – 005 – Revision N as part of the Wheatcroft consultation. The only change between the Rev N Layout Plan (A951 – 005 – N) and the Rev P Layout Plan (A951 – 005 – P) is a change in tenure of two plots to affordable, with no changes made from a design or highways and transportation perspective. It is therefore considered that there is no adverse impact on health and safety. It is envisaged at this stage that the highways will be offered for adoption and Mr P Taylor's Statement of Case confirms that the proposed road layout is adoptable.

vii) Contrary to NPPF 2024 – Paragraph 129

The development of this site aims to make efficient and effective use of the land. The proposed diverse mix of dwellings will meet local market needs while reinforcing the established character of the area. The site is also well located in relation to public transport, with services accessible within a reasonable walking distance.

viii) Contrary to NPPF 2024– Paragraph 135

The development will deliver an attractive, landscaped site frontage that respects the existing dwellings and established building line along Hinckley Road. The site layout has been informed by sound urban design principles, with dwellings positioned to create focal points and dual-aspect units addressing key junctions and areas of open space. The arrangement also allows for strong landscaping opportunities, which can be secured through appropriate planning conditions. While Barwell does not have a single, defining local vernacular, the proposed dwellings incorporate traditional architectural styles and detailing that are evident within the surrounding area, ensuring the scheme responds positively to its context.

ix) Contrary to NPPF 2024 – Paragraph 139

There are no design codes associated to the application site, however point iv above demonstrates compliance with Policy DM10 as well as consideration being given to Hinckley & Bosworth Supplementary Planning Document 'The Good Design Guide'

Other Design Considerations

Local Authority Space Standards

The council's garden standards in the 'Good Design Guide' state the minimum garden lengths of 7m and areas of 60sqm for a 2 bedroom dwelling and 80sqm for a 3 bedroom dwelling are acceptable. The layout complies with and often exceeds this, with many plots benefitting from rear gardens in excess of 10m.

Habitable rooms at 2 storey facing rear to rear should not be less than 21m apart.

Habitable rooms at 2 storey facing side gables should not be less 12m apart.

I have identified three plots that will require some consideration in handing and orientation of the specific plot.

1. Plot 5 – This will be handed in order to have the kitchen and dining windows facing the street to the east. Bedroom 1's window will be moved to the rear elevation, as will the French doors to the living room. This change is reflected in drawing '25 - Type D1 - Floor Plans & Elevations'
2. Plot 98 – This plot will have windows facing its own parking area and, in my view, provides sufficient separation from the adjacent plot.
3. Plots 114-115 / 116 relationship – The bedroom window to the D type is positioned on the north-east corner of the plot, allowing it to look beyond the gable end of the M type to the east. As this window could also be considered a secondary window to the bedroom, the option of obscuring the glazing may be appropriate.

In my opinion each of the 9 points in Policy DM10 has been complied with, moreover the scheme was considered acceptable by the planning officer and was earmarked for approval until the applicant sought to vary the Section 106.

Summary

I have visited the site and assessed the constraints and opportunities that influence the design approach.

Although the site should be considered as a comprehensive whole, for clarity I will describe it in terms of its eastern and western parcels.

Eastern Parcel

The street pattern within the eastern development parcel is significantly constrained by its original rectilinear form. This is further restricted by the presence of an existing sewer line, which necessitates the positioning of the street along a north–south axis.

Despite these constraints, the design of this part of the scheme successfully creates small, intimate pockets of development served by private drives accessed both from the proposed site entrance and from the existing housing further east.

The dwellings have been arranged to form an attractive frontage, incorporating appropriately positioned dual-aspect properties that address the public realm.

This design approach continues further south, with homes orientated towards the central green space, while those along the southern boundary are outward-facing, taking advantage of views over the open countryside beyond.

Western Parcel

The street pattern in this area is less constrained, which has provided an opportunity to create a sense of arrival beyond the attractive landscaped site frontage through the introduction of speed-reducing bends. This highway feature establishes a focal point at the head of the street and allows for the strategic positioning of dual aspect dwellings to guide the attention of both pedestrians and vehicular users as the development meanders further south.

Homes along the southern boundary are again outward facing and spread out along private drives with views of green space beyond.

Conclusion

In summary, the proposed residential development is a good quality scheme that demonstrates strong urban design principles while meeting the required minimum spacing standards between dwellings.

The layout is entirely appropriate and reflects a residential design ethos that is widely accepted at a national level, with the modest increase in density being a reasonable and proportionate response to addressing the identified shortfall in housing supply.

The site frontage will create an attractive addition to the street scene at the western edge of the settlement, and the development as a whole will contribute positively to the vitality of Barwell as a place where people will want to live.



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