07/01112/FUL



59 High Street, Barwell, Leicestershire

Design and Access Statement

For proposed redevelopment of site for A1 retail store with 14 apartments, associated parking and landscaping

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SECTION 1

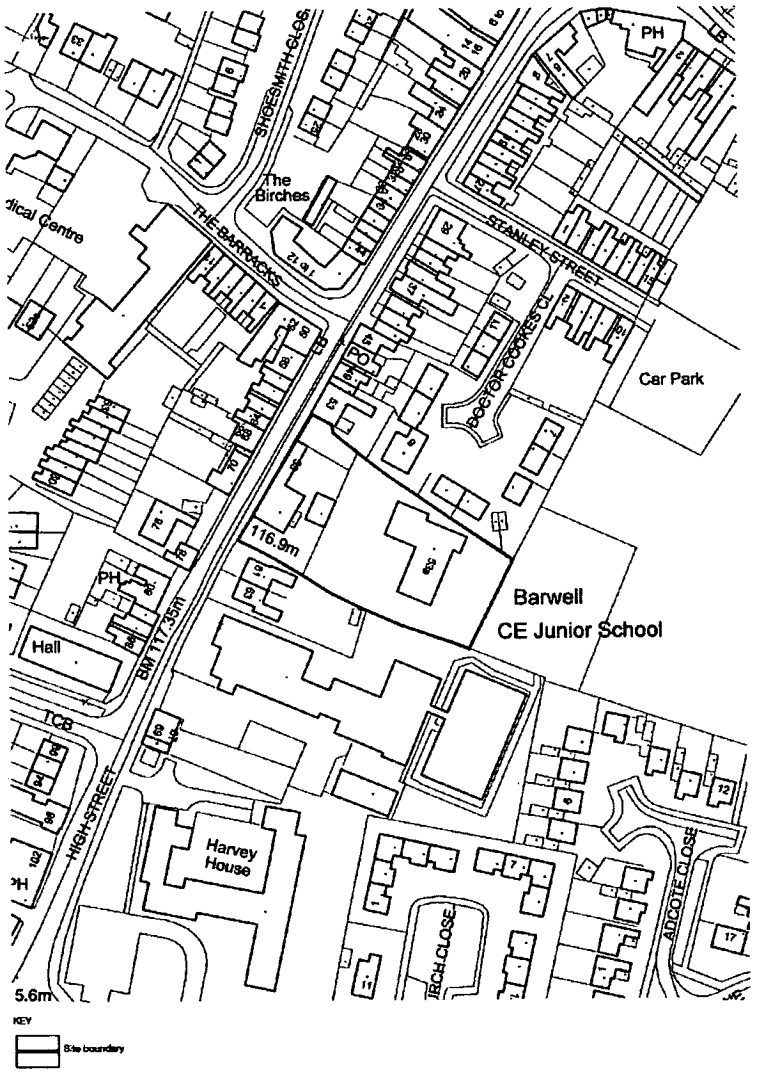
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This statement provides design and access information in support of a full planning application, submitted on behalf of Tesco plc. The statement has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the guidance of DCLG Circular 01/2006.

The planning application is for the redevelopment of a site within Barwell village centre, which is designated both as a Conservation Area and a shopping area, to provide an A1 convenience store and 14 apartments. The proposal includes access and parking details, and the provision of private amenity space. Denning Male Polisano Architects have prepared the detailed application drawings which are submitted for full planning approval. Access is also considered in the Transport Assessment prepared by Pinnacle Transportation, which accompanies the application. This statement should also be read in conjunction with the Supporting Planning Statement and Conservation Area Appraisal accompanying the application.

Section 2.0 of this report provides an appraisal of the site's context and the steps taken to understand that context. Section 3.0 explains how different parties have been involved in the evolution of the proposals. Section 4.0 evaluates the context and involvement to provide directions for the design and access principles. Section 5.0 covers the design and access principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposals and Section 6.0 provides a summary and conclusions.



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Physical, Social & Economic Context

The site is located on the High Street within the historic core of the village of Barwell. The historic core is one of two designated conservation areas in Barwell and it is also the retail centre for the settlement. The retail centre comprises a building society, post office, local store, public houses and a collection of takeaways and local specialist retailers. The main car park for Barwell village centre is a short walk from the application site, to the north.

The site comprises a dwelling to the street frontage and a garden ornament manufacturing and sales premises to the rear. The dwelling is a two storey building dating back to at least 1888, which has been quite extensively modified and modernised from its original state. The business premises to the rear are housed in a single storey flat roof building and the commercial use also involves open storage on the site. The majority of the site is hard surfaced in concrete and tarmac. The premises are also used for haulage operations.


Barwell C of E Primary school


The site frontage

To the south of the site, there is an adjoining dwelling towards the street frontage, but to the rear of this, also adjoining the application site, there is the Barwell C of E Primary School. To the north, towards the street frontage, is a hot food takeaway with residential accommodation above.

To the rear of this, also adjoining the application site, are bungalows on Doctor Cooke's Close. To the east of the site is the school playground and playing fields. The built form of the site's context is generally small scale, domestic, two storey, but with some larger landmark buildings, i.e. the school. The street pattern is very closely knit with buildings fronting directly on to the street. The buildings mainly comprise a mix of late-Victorian terraced worker's dwellings and early-Victorian cottages, but there are also traditional red brick and stone fronted commercial premises and a thatch and timber cruck frame building.

The density of the surroundings is quite high; measurements taken for areas north of and opposite the site reveal densities of between 51 and 85 dwellings per hectare.



Whilst the building stock of the conservation area might have had the potential to form a high quality built heritage for the village, it has unfortunately been significantly altered in the past.

Much of the architectural character of the buildings has been removed and shop fronts have been replaced with large-pane uPVC units, with many internally illuminated box fascia signs. The visual context of the site is therefore in need of some enhancement.



The village has a ward population of approximately 8781. The village has been subject of quite significant peripheral expansion over the last 50 years and has become quite closely physically linked with the adjacent village of Earl Shilton. However it has always had quite close social links with this neighbouring village, particularly through the boot and shoe trade which the villages shared in the Victorian era. At the present time only 30%


Building frontages in need of improvement

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of the resident population are economically active and the main sectors of employment are in manufacturing, distribution, retail and hospitality. The Barwell Neighbourhood Profile 2007 identifies that the area experiences high deprivation relating to income, education skills and training, employment and health. It also identifies that the Barwell area is limited in terms of access to clinics and health centres, higher education colleges, and public convenience services such as grocery stores and certain sports facilities.

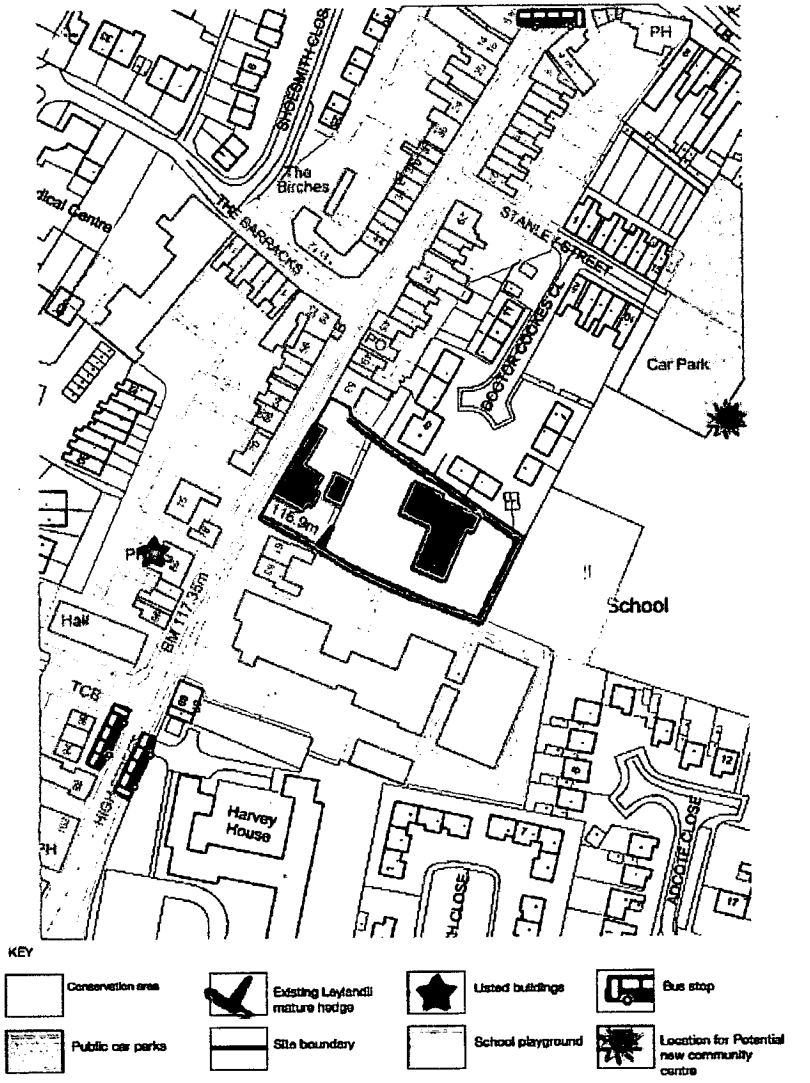
Whilst the village has quite a large population, it has a disproportionately small number and range of retail outlets. Neighbouring Earl Shilton has a significantly greater range and is likely to offer the residents of Barwell significantly greater choice should they travel to Earl Shilton by car rather than walk into Barwell.

In terms of accessibility, the site is within easy walking distance of the main urban areas of Barwell and it lies on a bus route through the village. The frequency of bus services is indicated in the table opposite.

	Service	Main Destination	Mon. to Sat. daytime	Mon. to Sat. evening	Sunday
FREQUENCY	82	Hinckley	15 mins.	-	-
	158	Leicester and Hinckley	20 mins.	60 mins.	60 mins.
	158	Nuneaton	60 mns.	-	-
	159	Hinckley and Coalville	60 mins.	-	-
	81A	Hinckley	15 mins.	60 mins.	-
	48	Leicester, Coventry and Hinckely	20 mins.	-	-
	48	Coventry and Hinckley	-	-	60 mins.

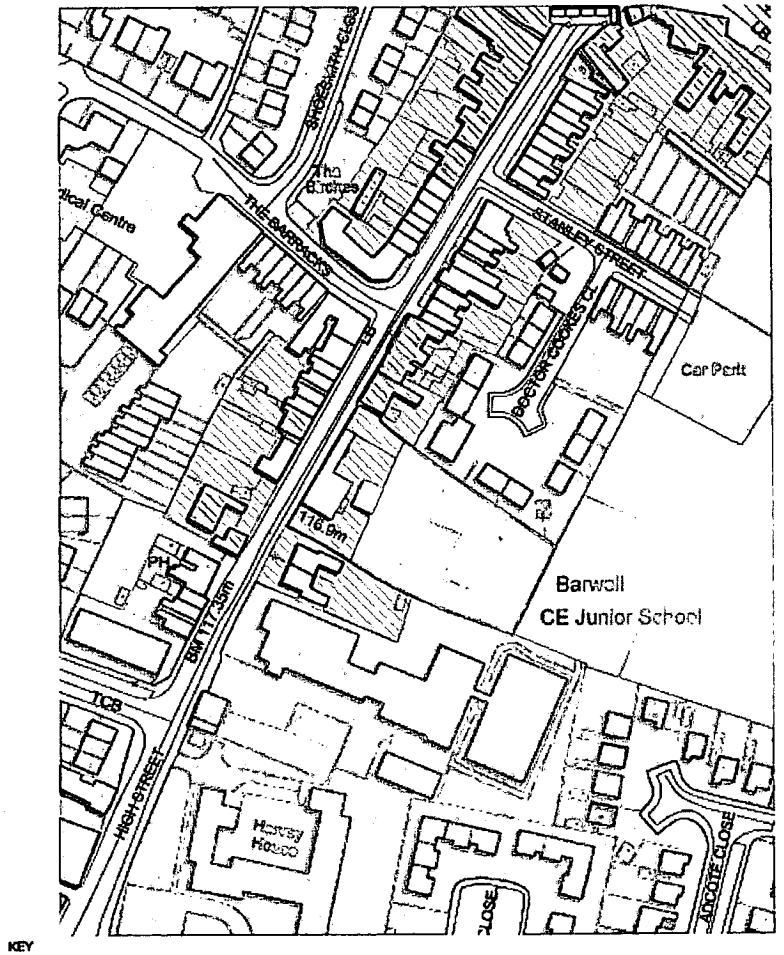
The entrance to the site falls within a 20mph zone as it lies very close to the primary school. Generally, the High Street has limited parking and has controls during the daytime to avoid the restriction of traffic flows. Historically, the present use of the site will have generated a large number of vehicular movements through an access point with quite poor visibility due to the positions of buildings either side.

The plans on the following pages interpret the context of the site.



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At a national level Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. Good design plays a fundamental role in achieving this. As PPS1 states:

"Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning. Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted."

Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing (PPS3) sets out the national policy for housing and seeks that housing is developed in suitable locations, offering a good range of community facilities and with access to jobs, services and infrastructure. PPS3 is concerned that new developments create places which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional and inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character. It recommends a design-led approach to the provision of car-parking space that is well-integrated with a high quality public realm which is pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly.

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996-2016 provides relevant guidance on the density of residential development. It states that developments should achieve as high a density as possible, having regard to accessibility to local centres, providing an appropriate mix of housing and design, layout and landscaping principles. It guides that in local centres a minimum density of 40 dwellings per hectare should be achieved.

The Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan (2000) contains a number of design and access policies of relevance to the proposals. These are:

- BE1 – Design and Siting of Development;
- BE2 – Access to Buildings;

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- BE7 – Development in Conservation Areas;
- BE9 – Shop Fronts in Conservation Areas;
- BE11 – Signs & Advertisements in Conservation Areas.

These policies are set out in detail in the Supporting Planning Statement accompanying the application, but in summary they seek to ensure that development is of a high standard of design in terms of scale, mass, density, form and materials. They state that proposals should forge a strong link between the proposed buildings and spaces and the character of the local area.

In a conservation area, proposals must respect the form, proportions and street pattern of the surroundings and must either preserve or enhance the conservation area. The above policies also require that developments are accessible to people with disabilities, the elderly and those with young children.

As an appendix to the Local Plan, the Council sets out guidance on parking provision in new developments, which is expressed in the form of targets or guidelines relating to different types of uses. Where areas are served by a realistic choice of transport provision, i.e. in town centres, close to bus routes with a frequent daily service or where adequate and readily available free public car parking is situated close to the proposed development, lower levels of car parking will be considered in individual cases. The relevant guidelines for the proposed development are:

- A1 shops – one space per 30 square metres plus provision for deliveries or unloading.
- Apartments with two bedrooms or less – 3 spaces per 2 dwellings (NB the Local Plan actually states 2 spaces per 3 dwellings but this is understood to be a typographical error).
- For retail stores under 500 square metres, 2 cycle parking spaces.
- One cycle parking space per 3 dwellings for residential developments.
- One disabled parking space is required per 25 parking spaces for shops.
- For residential development 'suitable' disabled parking provision should be made.

The application site is considered to be in a location where the Council should apply car parking guidelines flexibly as it is in a local centre, on a regular bus route and there is free public car parking nearby.

Detailed guidance for residential development is also contained in the Council's New Residential Development Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) (2000). This sets out the following relevant considerations:

- Amenity space should be provided at a rate of 10 square metres per apartment;
- A recycling area should be incorporated into larger developments;
- Privacy should be maintained by a separation of 25 metres window to window on neighbouring properties;
- The density of the development should reflect its surroundings;
- Key design considerations are roofscape, architectural features and materials.
- The layout should provide safe and convenient access and should carefully integrate with existing site features.

The Council's Shopping & Shop Fronts SPG (2003) recognises that shop fronts have a significant visual impact upon an area and seeks that signage, security shutters and grilles are carefully designed.

Manual for Streets

Some of the key planning considerations in the design of a new retail and residential development are highway safety, access and street design. Leicestershire County Council's 'Highways, Transportation & Development' guidance (HTD), revised in April 2006, sets out requirements for junction design, visibility and road construction. However, more up to date guidance, which places a strong emphasis on urban design principles, is contained in the Manual for Streets (MfS), published March 2007.

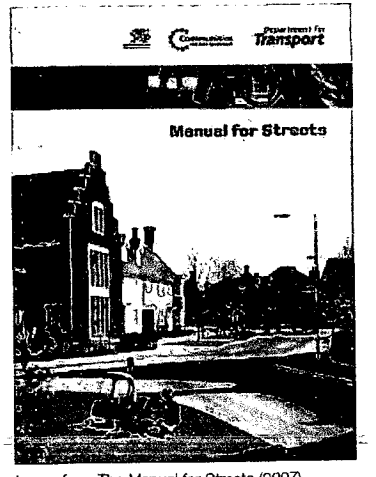


Image from The Manual for Streets (2007).

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Images from The Manual for Streets (2007).

MfS focuses on lightly-trafficked residential streets, but many of its key principles may be applicable to other types of street, for example high streets and lightly-trafficked lanes in rural areas. MfS states that streets should no longer be designed by assuming 'place' to be automatically subservient to 'movement'. Both should be considered in combination, with their relative importance depending on the street's function within a network. It is only by considering both aspects that the right balance will be achieved. It is seldom appropriate to focus solely on one to the exclusion of the other, even in streets carrying heavier volumes of traffic, such as high streets. It also states that locations with a relatively high place function would be those where people are likely to gather and interact with each other, such as outside schools, in local town and district centres or near parades of shops

It is considered that MfS is highly applicable to Barwell High Street. Barwell's High Street has a laid back character, where local residents walk their children to school and people gather to interact. Whilst many high streets may be a through route for a significant amount of traffic, Barwell's High Street does not act as a significant through route due to the A47 bypassing Barwell. Even those wishing to link from the A47 to the A447 would not use Barwell High Street. It only acts as a local street serving the retailing area, adjacent residential areas and linking to small settlements such as Stoke Golding and Dadlington. Much of the High Street is in fact residential and, due to the presence of the primary school, slower speeds are encouraged by an advisory 20mph zone.

In view of the above, it is considered that Barwell High Street is a location where place should be highly prioritised over movement in terms of its place-movement function. To make vehicle movements too high a priority in street design would be to the detriment of this local high street; it would allow for vehicles to travel at high speeds and would not give adequate priority to pedestrians who wish to enjoy the community focus of their local high street in a safe environment. Barwell is at the beginning of a potential period of regeneration at present, with the opening of a new community centre which will be the focus for various community initiatives. It is considered that the regeneration of the High Street should focus on making it a more pleasant place to use for pedestrians and this proposed retail and residential development can make a significant contribution to this.

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Pre-Application Discussions

The principles behind how the site should be developed and requirements for information to support a planning application have been the subject of pre-application discussions between the applicants and their advisers and officers of the relevant Local Authorities. Officers who provided advice included:

- David Warden, Area Planning Officer
- Chris Merriman – Senior Planning Officer
- Matt Lennon, Highways Officer (Leicestershire County Council)
- Philip Metcalfe, Area Planning Officer
- Barry Whirrity, Conservation Officer

The principal planning issues highlighted by the pre-application discussions were as follows.

- A mixed use scheme comprising retail and residential uses would be acceptable in principle provided all issues of traffic and residential amenity are satisfactorily dealt with and the proposals demonstrate good design.

- If the existing frontage building cannot viably be converted and a replacement building offers an improvement to the Conservation Area, in principle the frontage building could be redeveloped.

- Any proposed building to the site frontage should follow the logic of what was there originally, but the design to the rear of the site can be different provided that it is good quality. A double pitched building was recommended to the frontage.

- Concerns were expressed regarding the height of proposed 3 storey apartments. It was requested that the architects consider ways to reduce the height and impact of the buildings and that it is demonstrated that the proposed apartments would not affect the amenity of neighbouring dwellings through overshadowing. Overlooking of neighbouring dwellings was also a concern and officers requested that the proposals minimise opportunities for a loss of privacy to be caused.

- If the level of parking provision does not meet the targets set out in the Appendix to the Local Plan then a robust justification should be made as to how parking provision would work. A parking demand assessment should be provided and explanation provided of how store deliveries would affect parking provision.

- The proposed density should take into account Structure Plan guidance and the character of the surroundings.

- Noise attenuation measures should be included as appropriate.

- The new space to be created at the site entrance could be highly successful and could contribute to the public realm. It is suggested that it could contain some public art.

- It will be necessary to demonstrate that the proposed access is the safest way of accessing the site and that it can offer adequate visibility and ensure highway safety for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

The design approach adopted and access arrangements proposed have evolved taking account the officer observations set out above.

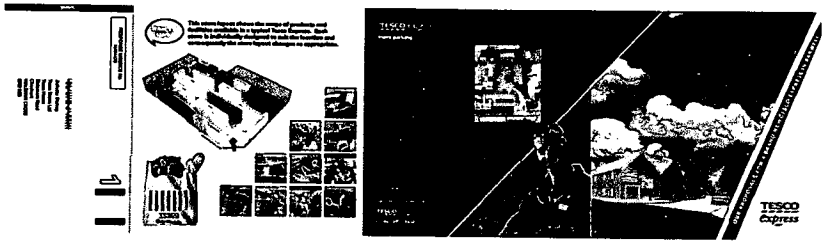
Community Involvement

The pre-application design process has also involved direct consultation with the Head of Barwell C of E School. The applicants recognised that the school could be a particularly sensitive neighbour to the site and the school is adjacent to the greatest length of the site's boundary. A pre-application meeting with the school and further consultation with the Local Education Authority established that the school did not object to the principle of a proposal for a convenience store and apartments. However they were concerned to ensure that the proposals would de designed so as to eliminate any opportunities for overlooking of the school grounds. Concerns were also expressed that, due to the height and proximity of the proposed buildings to the school boundary, they could cause a loss of light to the school grounds. The school also expects satisfactory boundary treatments and security measures to be incorporated within the development'.

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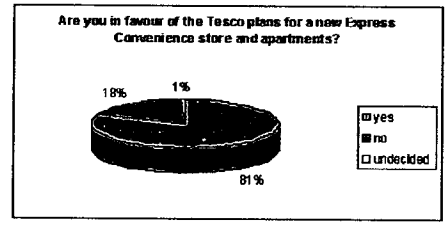
In order to inform the detailed design of the proposals and take into account the priorities of the local community, Tesco carried out a consultation exercise with 3,500 households, covering the whole of Barwell. A leaflet was distributed (see below) which informed local



residents of the proposals, how they had been developed so far, and sought their views. The aim was to identify whether there were any aspects of particular concern that could be addressed in the planning application submission. A Tesco representative also visited the home of a neighbouring resident to respond to their questions directly. A significant response was received to this consultation, with 246 responses being returned, the vast majority of which were positive. This is demonstrated in the following summary:

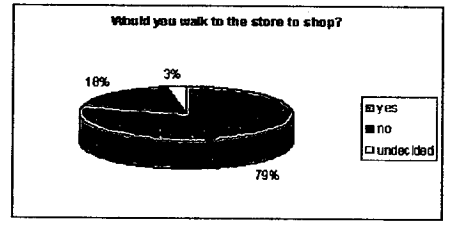
Are you in favour of the Tesco plans for a new Express convenience store and apartments?

Yes	No	Undecided
269	60	3



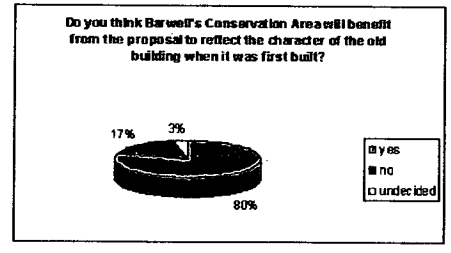
Would you walk to the store to shop?

Yes	No	Undecided
263	59	10



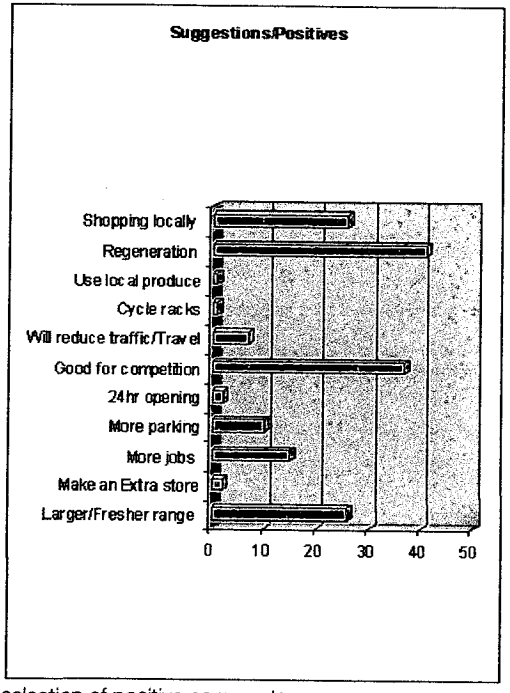
Do you think Barwell's Conservation Area will benefit from the proposal to reflect the original character of the old building when it was first built?

Yes	No	Undecided
265	56	11



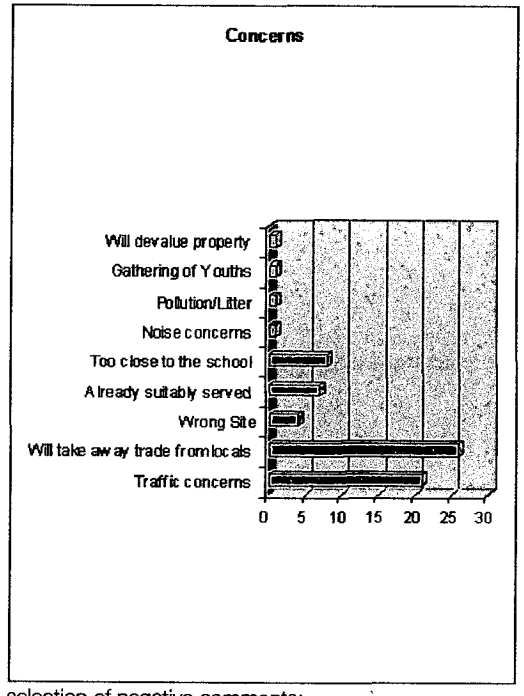
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A representative selection of positive comments:

- Barwell needs revitalising so it's a step in the right direction.
- We need a cheaper store in Barwell as the Co-op is too expensive for OAPs like me who have no transport to shop elsewhere.
- I think this is a brilliant idea. Barwell needs bringing in to the new century.
- This can only be an improvement to Barwell and nice to have a good local store. Best of luck.
- We think it would be great. It is just what Barwell needs. Plus jobs for local people.
- We only have an out-dated Co-op so we have to shop outside the village. We would welcome Tesco.
- Looking forward to a decent shop in the area and bring back life.



A representative selection of negative comments:

- We will object most vigorously. Other businesses in Barwell are bound to suffer leading to more derelict properties.
- This store will be to the detriment of the small independent shops in this village location.
- Lorries to service the store will cause major disruption of narrow High Street.
- Although there would be extra parking it is right next to the school and would increase traffic in an already congested area.
- I don't want cars driving past my house day and night.
- If it is open in to the evenings it will be noisy for nearby residents.
- Village shops would not last a month, jobs would be lost and small businesses would be bankrupt.

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The consultation exercise has highlighted the positive benefits of the proposals in terms of regeneration, creation of employment and providing a more competitive, high quality and good value retail offering in the village centre. It is clear that villagers are not happy with the current retail offering, which is dominated by one convenience store which does not meet their expectations. The consultation exercise also highlighted concerns regarding highway safety and parking, noise disturbance and competition to other traders. Competition is not a material planning consideration, but in any case the proposals are located within the village centre and do not draw trade away from it. Furthermore the proposals will encourage people to shop in Barwell which is likely to benefit other traders. The other concerns will be taken into account in the design of the proposals.

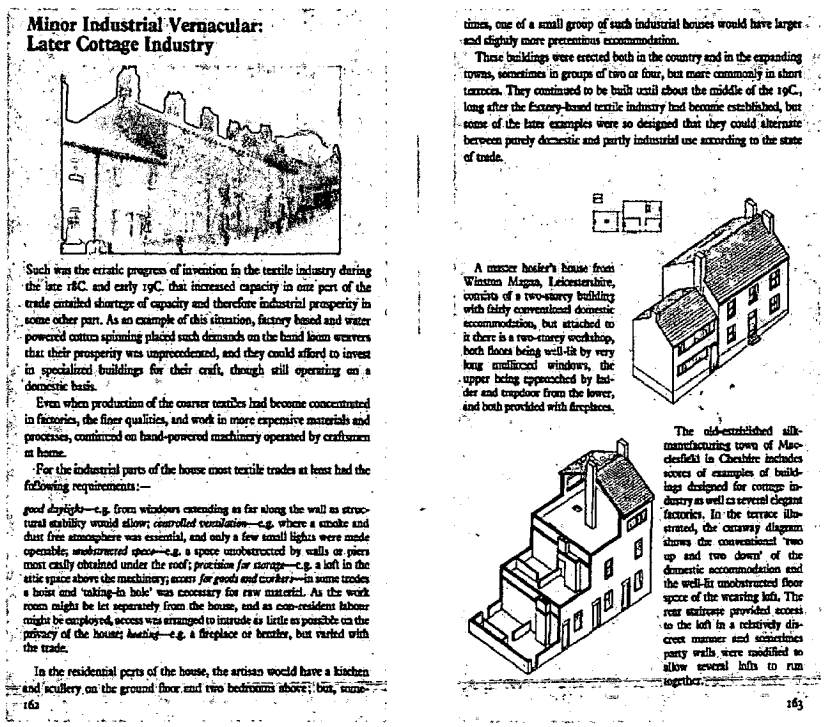
SECTION 4

EVALUATION

Based upon an assessment of the context and also discussions with those parties referred to in Section 3.0, the following opportunities and constraints have been identified.

Existing Frontage Building

In order to justify the demolition of this building, it is considered that the proposed development must offer an enhancement to the Conservation Area in terms of its design, character and appearance. This is something of a challenge to be met, but is also an opportunity to create a positive improvement to the Conservation Area. It is considered that the proposals should attempt to reflect some of the positive characteristics of the existing building and should refer to its past.



Minor Industrial Vernacular: Later Cottage Industry

Such was the erratic progress of invention in the textile industry during the late 18C. and early 19C. that increased capacity in one part of the trade entailed shortage of capacity and therefore industrial prosperity in some other part. As an example of this situation, factory based and water powered cotton spinning placed such demands on the hand loom weavers that their prosperity was unprecedented, and they could afford to invest in specialized buildings for their craft, though still operating on a domestic basis.

Even when production of the coarser textiles had become concentrated in factories, the finer qualities, and work in more expensive materials and processes, continued on hand-powered machinery operated by craftsmen at home.

For the industrial parts of the house most textile trades at least had the following requirements:—

good daylight—e.g. from windows extending as far along the wall as structural stability would allow; *controlled ventilation*—e.g. where a smoke and dust free atmosphere was essential, and only a few small lights were made openable; *unobstructed space*—e.g. a space unobstructed by walls or piers most easily obtained under the roof; *provision for storage*—e.g. a loft in the attic space above the machinery; *access for goods and workers*—in some trades a hoist and 'taking-in hole' was necessary for raw material. As the work room might be let separately from the house, and as non-resident labour might be employed, access was arranged to intrude as little as possible on the privacy of the house; *heating*—e.g. a fireplace or heater, but varied with the trade.

In the residential parts of the house, the artisan would have a kitchen and scullery on the ground floor and two bedrooms above; but, sometimes, one of a small group of such industrial houses would have larger and slightly more pretentious accommodation.

These buildings were erected both in the country and in the expanding towns, sometimes in groups of two or four, but more commonly in short terraces. They continued to be built until about the middle of the 19C., long after the factory-based textile industry had become established, but some of the later examples were so designed that they could alternate between purely domestic and partly industrial use according to the state of trade.

A master hosier's house from Wanston Magna, Leicestershire, consists of a two-storey building with fairly conventional domestic accommodation, but attached to it there is a two-storey workshop, both floors being well-lit by very long mullioned windows, the upper being approached by ladder and trapdoor from the lower, and both provided with fireplaces.

The old-established silk-manufacturing town of Macclesfield in Cheshire includes scores of examples of building designed for cottage industry as well as several elegant factories. In the terrace illustrated, the cutaway diagram shows the conventional 'two up and two down' of the domestic accommodation and the well-lit unobstructed floor space of the weaving loft. The rear staircase provided access to the loft in a relatively discreet manner and sometimes party walls were modified to allow several lofts to run together.

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The existing building is considered to derive its character from cottage industry vernacular, as defined by Ronald Brunskill in the Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture, 1971 – see extract opposite. In particular, the mixture of horizontal and vertical windows is characteristic of this building vernacular.

Streetscape

The contextual assessment highlights that the historic street pattern consists of buildings directly fronting the street. Such buildings are laid out in a dense form and this defines the character of the Conservation Area. The proposed development should positively respond to this prevailing character. As well as providing a continuously enclosed frontage, the building also provides a gateway or focal point as one looks up the High Street towards the village centre. This is demonstrated in the photograph below. This is an important aspect of the site which offers an opportunity to create a more positive visual marker and to really enhance the street scene with a strong design feature.

The site at present is somewhat under used in terms of the density of development in relation to the surroundings. Whilst the form of development is positive to the street frontage, there is a long view into the site which does not contribute to the character of the conservation area. The proposed development offers the opportunity rethink how the whole site responds to the public domain and to create a new and exciting space.



The contextual assessment has also highlighted that the Conservation Area is in need of some enhancement in terms of its design and detailing. The proposed development offers an opportunity to address this and to create a new design standard for subsequent developments to aspire to.

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Residential Amenity

There are a small number of dwellings adjoining the application site, some of which are in quite close proximity to the site boundaries. The proposed development must be considerate of the privacy of these dwellings and should not create significant adverse impacts in terms of overshadowing and overbearing effects or increase in noise and disturbance.

Primary School

The relationship to the neighbouring primary school needs to be carefully considered in terms of privacy and security. The school also seek to limit the impact of the buildings in terms of loss of light.

Access

The proposed development needs to provide a safe access to the High Street, with adequate visibility for both motorists and pedestrians. This is particularly important given the position of the site on a main route to the neighbouring primary school. The development should adopt sustainable movement principles and embrace the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Design and Access

Now that the site context, opportunities and constraints have been evaluated, the design process can be explained.

Amount

The proposed development seeks to make better use of the site with a compatible mix of land uses. The amounts of the proposed uses are scheduled below:

- A retail store of approximately 372 square metres gross floor area.
- 14 apartments, including 9 one bed apartments and 5 two bed apartments.

The proposed convenience store will strengthen the role of the village retail centre and will enliven the streetscape. The amount of retail floorspace proposed is compatible with the scale of the settlement and surrounding retail and it will support the retail function of the centre rather than detract from it. The store would be a local convenience store, of a scale which can benefit from being able to operate on longer Sunday trading hours. The introduction of additional retail floorspace is, in principle, acceptable in this designated retailing area.

The number of apartments proposed is sufficient to respond positively to the prevailing density in the area but it is not so dense as to compromise the residential amenity of the proposed development or its surroundings. The density of the residential development, if the area of the retail store and its parking is excluded, is approximately 69 dwellings per hectare (dph).

This density exceeds the 40dph minimum set out in the Structure Plan and is within the range of densities found in the immediate surroundings. It is therefore considered appropriate and, furthermore, it will allow the creation of a mix of housing in this highly sustainable village centre location. In response to concerns raised by the local authority regarding the density of the development, the proposals have been reduced from 21 to 14 apartments throughout the course of pre-application negotiations.

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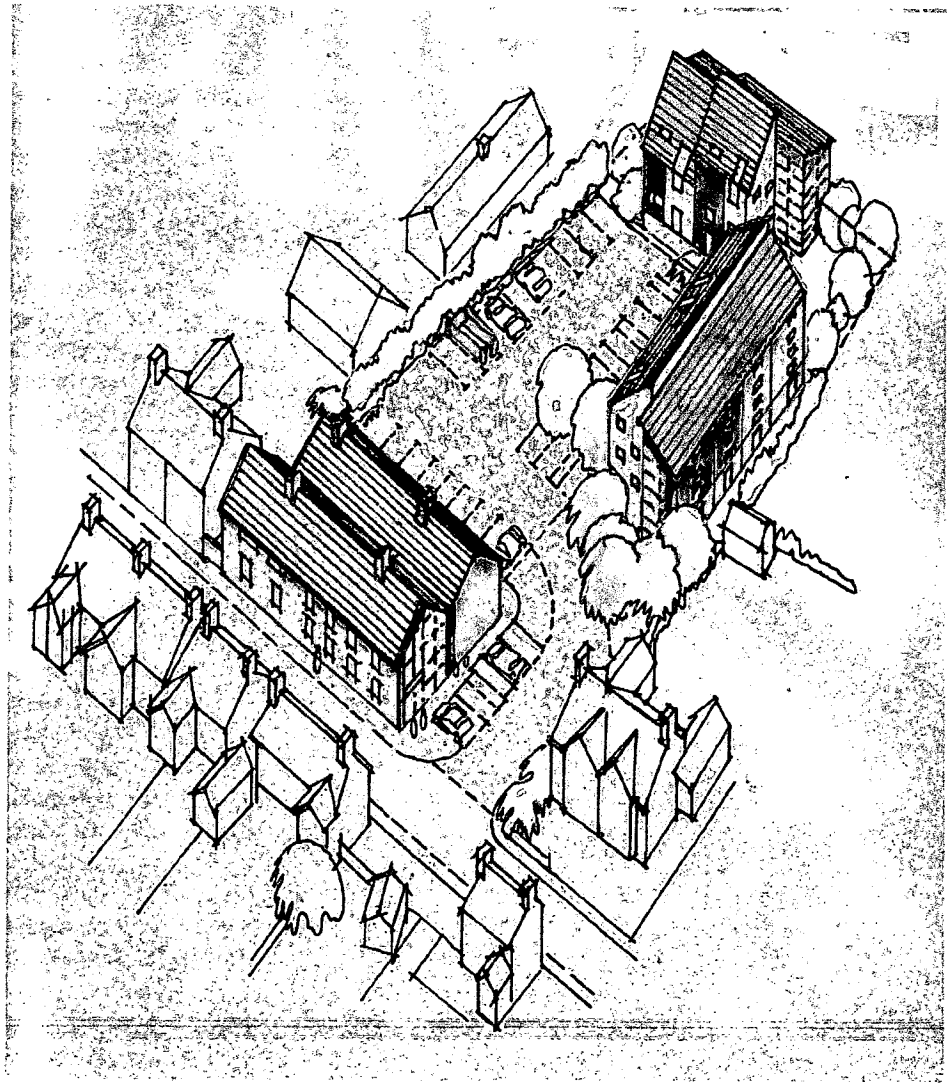
Layout

The proposed development repeats the pattern of buildings directly fronting the street and seeks to maximise the continuity of development along the street, whilst still maintaining a safe vehicular access point. The residential development to the rear follows the pattern of the surroundings, where development behind the High Street frontage is mainly residential.

The proposed development significantly improves upon the existing layout by siting a building at the head of the access road into the site, behind landscaping, introducing a feature of interest for the eye to rest upon as one looks into the site. This avoids messy views of car parking and creates a sense of a living urban realm. This new space is identified by high quality paving and is intended to create a new focal point for the High Street. The layout plan and 3D aerial view on the following pages demonstrate the layout concept for the site.

To the rear of the site, the residential development has been laid out sensitively in relation to its surroundings. Habitable room windows are mainly on elevations where they will not directly overlook neighbouring dwellings or where views will be obscured by existing boundary hedging. On the boundaries to the school the windows to corridors are also obscure glazed so as to eliminate opportunities for overlooking. The only direct relationship between habitable room windows is between Residential Block A and the bungalows on Doctor Cooke's Close. There is a separation distance here of 24.5 metres which, which is only a negligible amount short of the Council's 25 metre guideline and would not result in a lack of privacy. Furthermore, there is a 5 metre high hedge on the boundary to these bungalows and, since the bungalows are located very close to the boundary, this screening would still maintain their privacy even if the hedge were reduced in height in future.

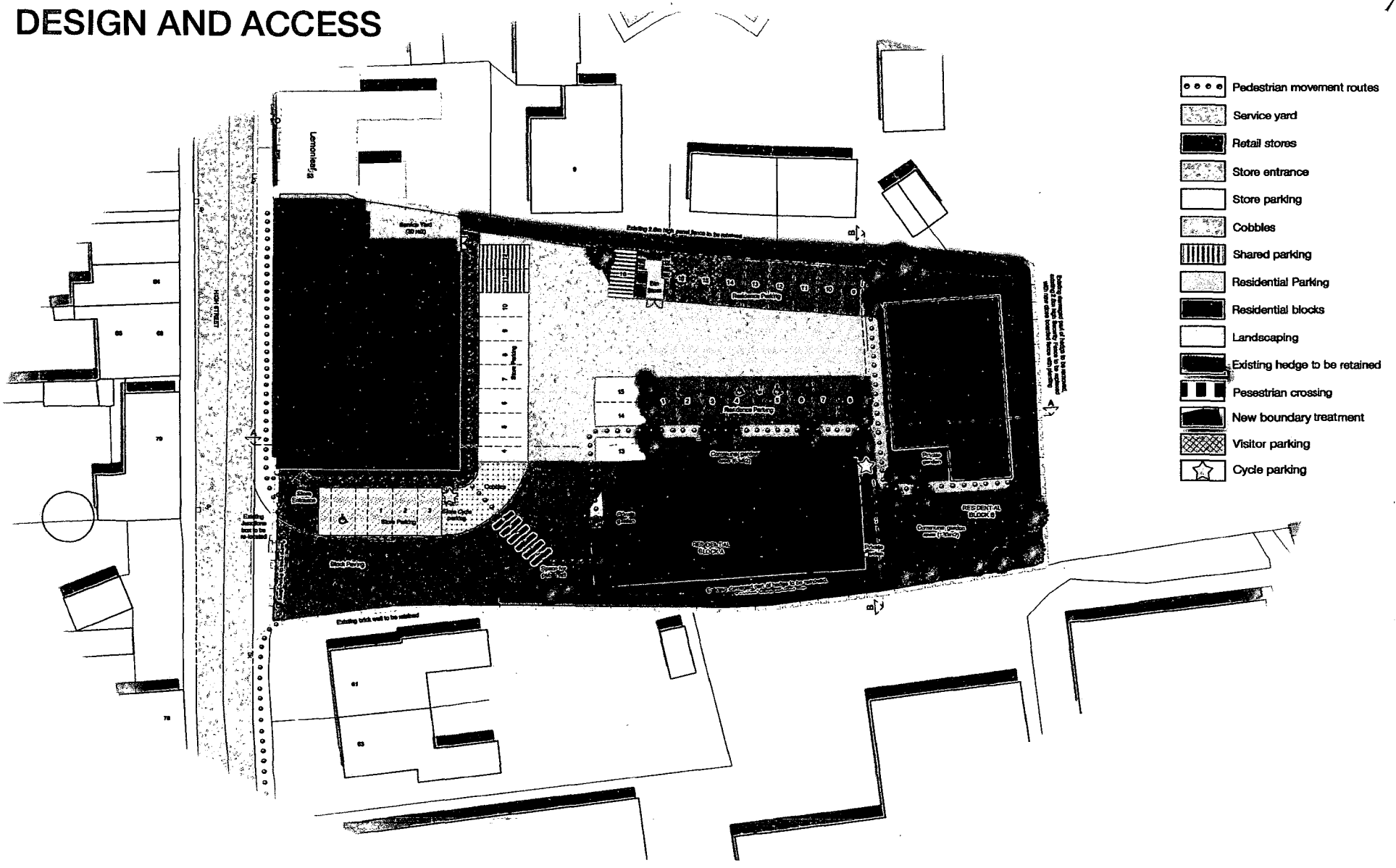
The layout also seeks to position the mass of the buildings where it will not impact upon the amenity of adjacent dwellings through overshadowing or overbearing effects. Where they are closest to the boundaries, the buildings are not within direct sight of any of the windows on neighbouring dwellings; instead they are offset and positioned away from the boundary with intervening landscaping. This means that there would not be any direct overbearing or overshadowing impact and, furthermore, the existing hedge is considered



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to screen the site from the neighbouring dwellings.

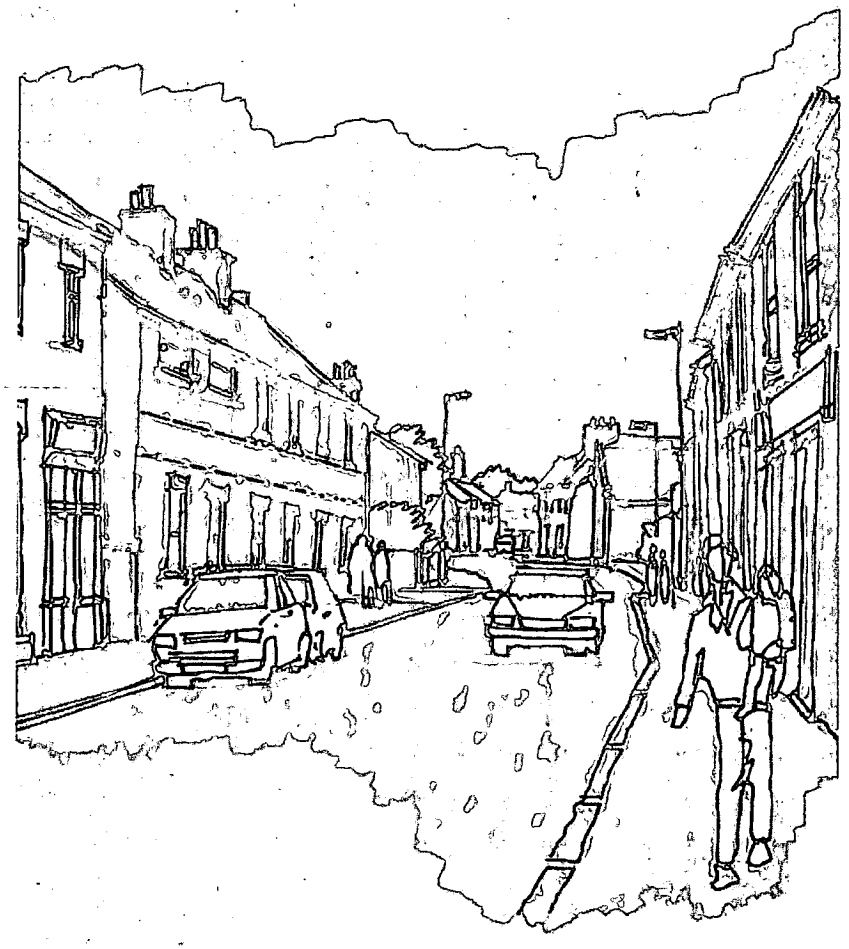
The mass of the buildings is positioned adjacent to the school boundary, where it will not impact upon residential amenity. Whilst a loss of light to school grounds is not a material planning consideration, the school's concerns have been addressed by a reduction in height of part of Block B to 2 storeys. The dead lengths of hedgerow along the school boundary are proposed to be replaced with a more substantial boundary treatment, such as a close boarded fence. Planting will also be carried out along the boundary.

Scale

The proposed frontage building reflects the small, domestic two storey scale of the surroundings to the street frontage. The proportions, depths and roof pitches of the frontage building are all highly appropriate to the surroundings. The double-pitched form of the building reflects a traditional form of building within Leicestershire. The building is a lower height than buildings to either side, reflecting the relationship of the existing building. The development will therefore appear highly sensitive to the streetscape in terms of its scale.

To the rear of the site, the lack of streetscape context offers an opportunity to consider a taller development, provided that it does not affect the dwellings neighbouring the site. There are other three storey buildings in a variety of locations in Barwell; some on the street frontage and some in areas behind the street frontage such as this. Therefore it is considered appropriate to introduce buildings of up to 3 storey buildings here in order to make efficient use of land and to create a strong visual marker at the head of the access road. In relation to the street scene, the taller development will be seen set back and the relative scale of the buildings will appear appropriate.

Concerns were raised by the local authority regarding 3 storey development in terms of its relationship with the surroundings and impact on neighbouring dwellings. In response to those concerns the development was reduced in height so that the 2nd floor of the apartments is partly within the roofspace. The height of Block B was also partly reduced to 2 storey, with the 1st floor similarly pushed into the roofspace, recognising the relationship with the adjacent bungalows. As a result of these reductions the scale of the development is wholly appropriate to its surroundings and it will not cause a significant overbearing or overshadowing impact on



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neighbouring dwellings. Furthermore, these changes to the scheme resulting from involvement have broken up the massing of the development further so that its form is not overly dominant in the surroundings.

Appearance

The design agenda for the proposed buildings is to introduce architectural details and character back into the High Street that have been lost by previous alterations to the existing building on the site. As mentioned previously, the inspiration for the design of the retail store is cottage industry vernacular.

The design includes a mix of horizontal and vertical windows to the front elevation, which have a traditional glazing pattern appropriate to the period being reflected. These windows will be set within reveals, which creates a more appropriate profile to the front elevation. The existing building has had replacement windows which have been fitted without reveals and therefore it has a rather bland appearance. The proposed design seeks to improve this.

The proposed windows will be steel framed, which allows for energy efficient glazing to be used and this will also create a light profile to the glazing bars - a much higher quality design detail than PVC which is apparent elsewhere in the Conservation Area.

An appropriate brick will be used for the front and other elevations and a natural slate roof is proposed. As shown opposite, this design detailing creates a building of distinctive character, which will make a significant contribution to the street scene. The signage to the frontage will be incorporated into brick reveals as 'architectural signage, reflecting local building detailing.

As the building is viewed up the High Street, as shown opposite, a striking and high quality new design feature is introduced in the form of a glazed end gable. This opens up the building and creates a focal point around the entrance area which, as described above, is proposed to be a new and exciting space in the public domain.

This glazed gable feature positively addresses views up the High Street and will significantly raise the bar for design quality in Barwell in general. The second gable, to the rear half of the building, is proposed to be cedar clad as a contrast to the glazed gable. The entrance to the store is also



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visually highlighted by a small cedar clad box feature.

As one looks into the site, the head of the access road is addressed, and the new public realm enclosed, by a striking end elevation to Residential Block A. The elevation incorporates further glazed areas, to relate to the store end elevation, and also uses clean white render so that it appears visually light.

Whilst the buildings to the rear of the site would fall outside the conservation area, they maintain the same high standard of design and attention to detail so as to create a visually interesting place to live. A simple, contemporary design is adopted so as not to visually conflict with the design of the frontage building. The mass of the blocks has been split in half vertically so as to break up their overall massing and avoid an overly solid form.

Landscaping

A main, private communal garden area of 130 square metres is provided for the proposed apartments. There are also further small communal garden areas, including a space for public art, and 3 individual private gardens. Cumulatively, these gardens exceed the required 10 square metres of amenity space per apartment that is set out in supplementary planning guidance. The main communal garden area is located in the most private area of the site, where users will enjoy the greatest level of amenity. It is proposed to plant this area with native tree species and to make it secure with a gate.



Subtle planting schemes of native species will also be used to differentiate between private and public space, to break up the appearance of the car park and to create an attractive setting for the buildings. In particular, the landscaping area at the head of the access road, to the south of Residential Block A, is considered to make a significant contribution to the new public space and the setting of the buildings. The applicant proposes that this area can include a piece of public art which could reflect an element of the local character or history. Full landscaping details are to be subject to further detailed approval by the Local Planning Authority.

Access

The proposals are considered to significantly improve vehicular access into the site over the current situation. Vehicles presently emerge between two buildings that abut the site frontage and visibility is also obscured to the north by cars parked in laybys on the street. Since the site is proposed for redevelopment, this offers an opportunity to improve the safety of vehicular access. A key aspect of highway safety in these circumstances is visibility for vehicles emerging from the proposed access.

In considering the potential for access into the site, highway safety is very important, but it must be taken into account alongside other urban design considerations. As stated previously, a key urban design objective is to have the retail store building on the street fronting, continuing the built form of the area. This means that the building is most appropriately positioned to the northern end of the site, with the access road to the southern end, because to position the building directly adjacent to the dwelling to the south would create an awkward visual relationship and would affect the amenity of the dwelling. To position the building at the southern end of the site would also mean that the head of the access road could not be positively enclosed by a building because a building in this position would unduly affect the amenities of bungalows on Doctor Cookes Close. These urban design objectives would suggest that, provided that highway safety is maintained, access to the southern end of the site would be most appropriate.

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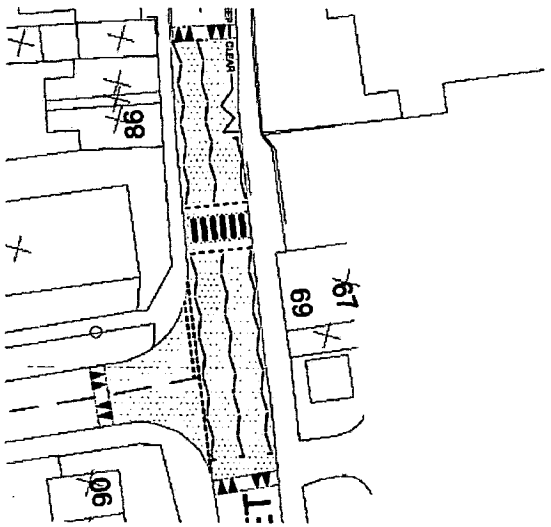
As mentioned previously, Manual for Streets is considered to be the appropriate design guidance for the new access. A speed survey has been carried out which reveals that the average speed of northbound traffic is 24.8 miles per hour and that of southbound traffic is 25.3 miles per hour. In situations where the average vehicle speed is 25 miles per hour, MfS recommends that visibility of 33 metres should be achieved in either direction, from a point 2.4 metres back from the carriageway. This is the requirement that is adopted in the design process for this proposal.

MfS also states that some circumstances will make it unlikely that vehicles approaching from the left will cross the centre line of the carriageway, for example opposing flows may be physically segregated at that point. If so, the visibility splay to the left can be measured to the centre line of the carriageway. It is considered that these are circumstances where visibility to the left (i.e. the south) can be measured to the centre line, because just to the south of the site there is a pedestrian crossing with chevrons extending either side of it. These chevrons advise motorists not to cross the centre line and they also, in conjunction with double yellow lines, prevent on street parking. It is therefore considered highly unlikely that northbound vehicles would cross the centre to the south of the site and it is therefore appropriate to measure visibility to the centre line.

To the north, visibility of 70 metres is achieved, or 37 metres if the parking bays in front of 53 High Street are occupied. In either scenario visibility to the north is more than adequate in relation to the 33 metre guideline. Whilst the removal of the parking bays to the front of 53 High Street would allow long visibility on a permanent basis, this is considered contrary to the objectives of keeping traffic speeds low along the High Street. Cars parked in the parking bays will act as a natural traffic calming feature as they restrict forward visibility and vehicles have to manoeuvre around them.

To the south, visibility of 33 metres is achieved to the centre line. This also complies with the Manual for Streets guideline. However, given that highway safety is a particular concern amongst local residents, and recognising that this will be a particular concern in the vicinity of the school, it is proposed that additional highway safety measures are incorporated into the design. It is not considered appropriate to increase visibility, for the same reasons as it is not considered appropriate to remove the parking bays to the north. However, if traffic speeds are lowered further then stopping distances will be shorter and vehicles emerging from the site will be able to do so more safely.

With the objective of lowering vehicle speeds, a speed table is proposed over the existing zebra crossing and adjacent to the school entrance. Whilst physically lowering vehicle speeds significantly, this will also give the motorist the impression that they are entering a traffic calmed area where the pedestrian takes priority. Furthermore, it is proposed that



the existing advisory 20 mile per hour speed limit is made enforceable with a Traffic Order. These highway improvements will considerably enhance the overall safety of the High Street in the vicinity of the school, for the wider benefits of residents, shoppers, parents and schoolchildren.

The proposals also incorporate a rumble strip to the site entrance to ensure that vehicles enter and leave the site slowly. Pedestrian movement routes are also recognised within the site and a pedestrian crossing point is provided within the site to allow people to safely access the retail store from the car park and also to access the proposed apartments by foot. The proposals make the following parking provision:

- 13 spaces for the retail store, plus one disabled space
- 14 spaces for the residential development, including two disabled spaces
- 2 visitor spaces for the apartments
- 3 shared spaces, which could be used by visitors to the apartments or to the retail store

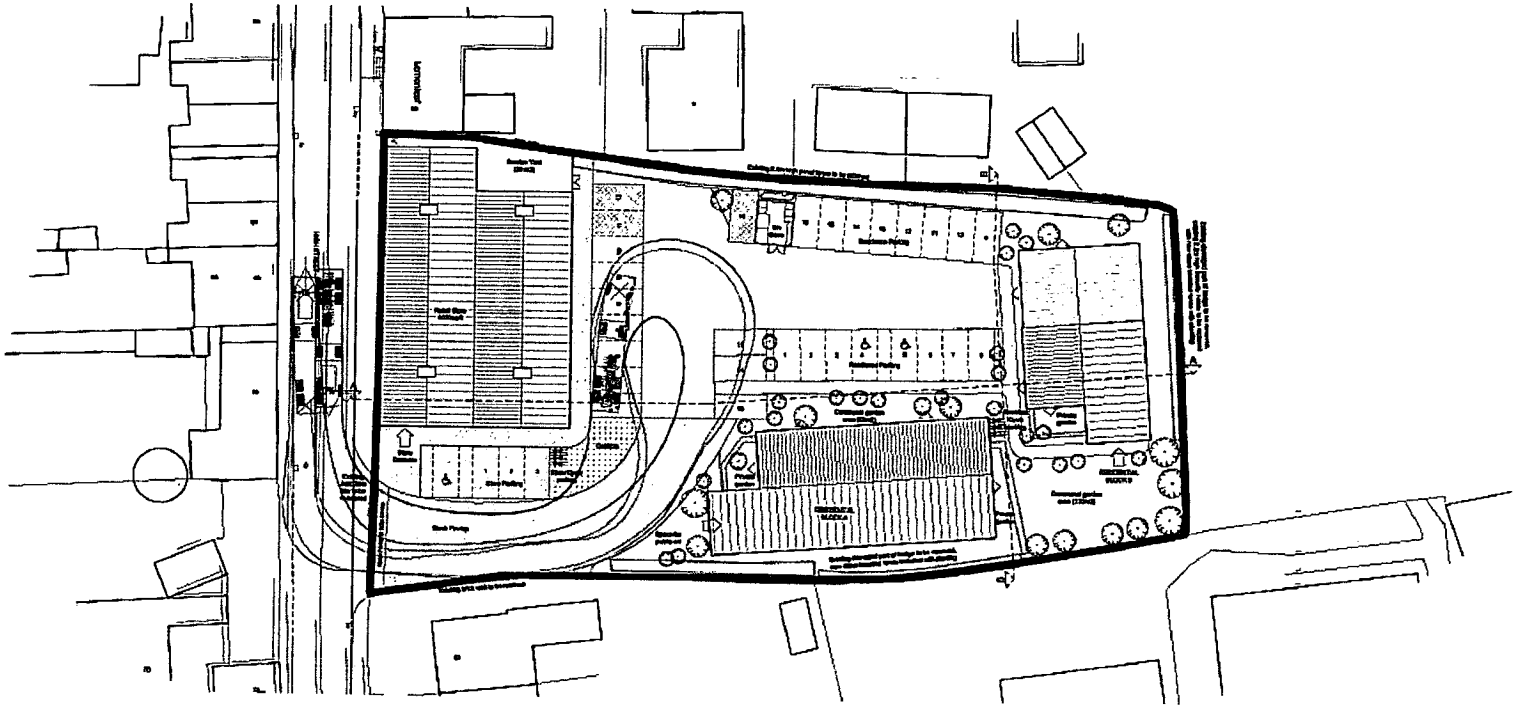
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- 3 cycle parking spaces for the retail store
- 3 cycle parking spaces for the apartments

The retail parking reaches the Local Plan Appendix target. The residential parking allows for one allocated space per apartment, plus space for visitors in both designated and shared spaces, which is considered consistent with the parking needs of this form of accommodation in such an accessible location. This falls slightly short of the parking guideline in the Local Plan Appendix, which would seek 21 spaces, as a total of 19 spaces are provided including visitor and shared spaces. However, this is only a guideline and this is considered to be an accessible location where, as set out in the Local Plan Appendix, a more flexible approach can be adopted. Furthermore, this shared arrangement allows for the greatest flexibility and best use of parking space by short-staying visitors to the site.

It does this in one manoeuvre and parks for unloading in a location which does not affect other traffic movements in and out of the site. It will be necessary to discontinue use 10 of the 14 parking spaces when a delivery is due, by the erection of a collapsible bollard. This operation is planned well in advance and is a normal procedure for the type of small convenience store proposed. It will take place at a regular time of the day and can be timed so as to avoid peak shopping hours. The use of the 3 additional shared spaces is not affected during deliveries and these spaces can continue to serve the retail store, making a potential 7 spaces available. The Transport Assessment accompanying this application has assessed parking demand during off-peak hours, when deliveries would be timed, and has concluded that there would be reserve capacity in the car parking even with 10 spaces decommissioned.



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CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

The contextual assessment of the site has highlighted the physical constraints and opportunities and the economic and social issues that the design needs to respond to.

The proposed development has satisfactory access arrangements. It is considerate of the privacy and amenity of neighbouring dwellings. The proposals are of an appropriate scale, massing, layout, design and appearance and will contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposals are considered to create a high quality new scheme which will significantly improve the general standard of design for new developments in Barwell. The proposals will be valuable in contributing towards the regeneration of Barwell.

On this basis, it is considered that the proposal represents a sustainable and responsive design, which relates directly to its physical, social and environmental context, and reflects the requirements of national and local planning policy.