Conservation Area Appraisal

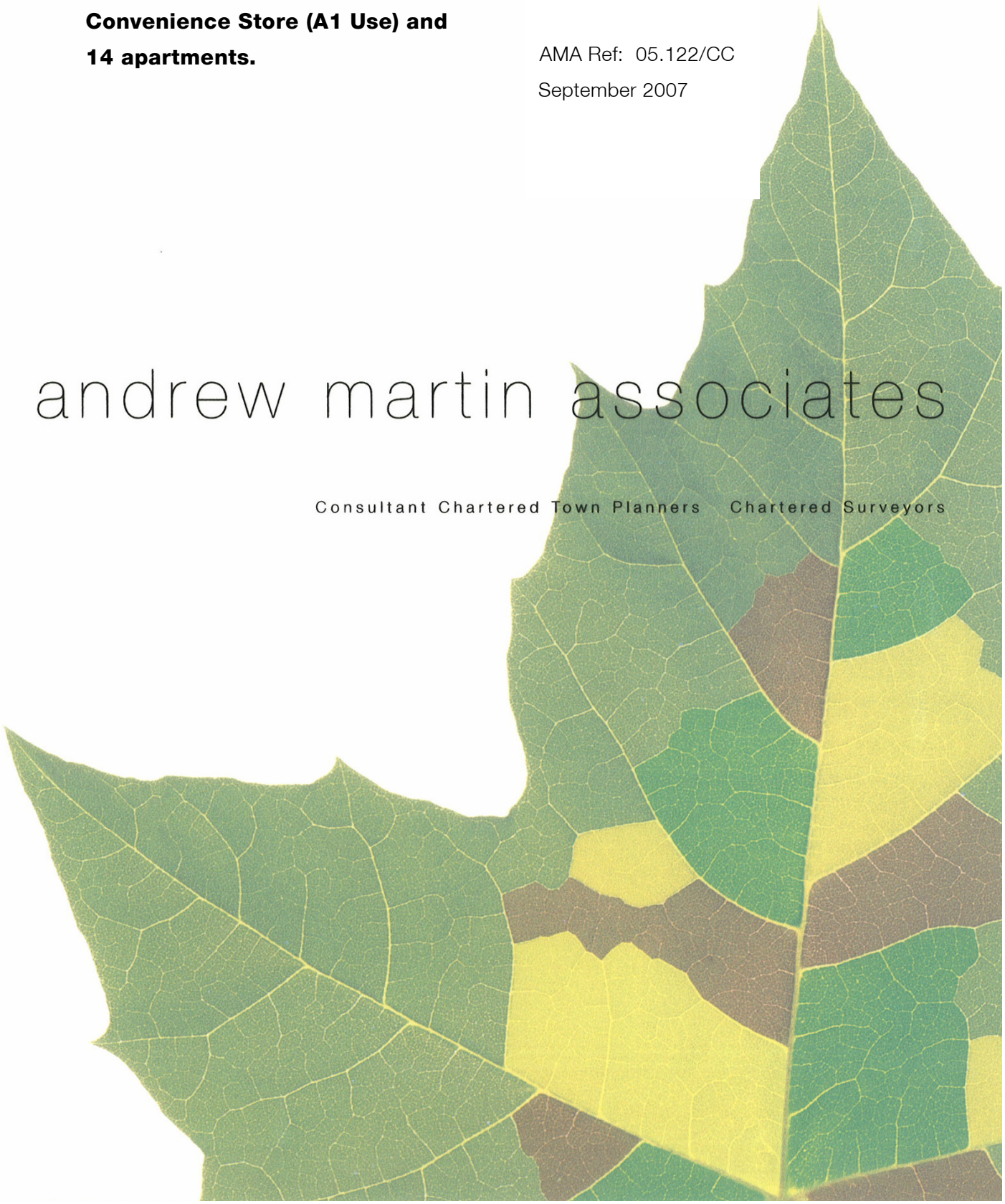
Redevelopment of site for the construction of a new Convenience Store (A1 Use) and 14 apartments.

59 High Street
Barwell
Leicestershire

Tesco plc

AMA Ref: 05.122/CC

September 2007



andrew martin associates

Consultant Chartered Town Planners Chartered Surveyors

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report is prepared to accompany applications for planning permission and conservation area consent submitted on behalf of Tesco plc, concerning the redevelopment of a site within the centre of Barwell. The site presently comprises a dwelling to the site frontage and, to the rear, the premises of a garden ornament retailer. It is proposed to redevelop the site for a new convenience store plus buildings comprising 14 apartments to the rear of the site, with associated access alterations, car parking and landscaping.

1.2 The conservation area is mainly characterised by its street pattern and the scale and form of the buildings within it. Due to substantial alterations and additions to the buildings, much of the character in the detail of the buildings has been lost. The building fronting the application site in particular is not considered worthy of preservation in its own right, due to it having been stripped of most of its character.

1.3 The proposed development is of high design quality and seeks to re-introduce architectural detailing and design quality. It is therefore considered to represent an enhancement to the conservation area.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The following supporting information has been prepared by Andrew Martin Associates on behalf of Tesco plc. Andrew Martin Associates is an independent environmental consultancy with in-house expertise including master planning, urban design, environmental assessment, landscape design and all aspects of town planning. The Company is based in Nottingham and Chelmsford but operates throughout England.

2.2 The purpose and scope of this report is to assess and evaluate the impact of the demolition of buildings and the proposed redevelopment of the site as a convenience store and 14 apartments upon the character and appearance of Barwelll Conservation Area. The report will assess the context of the site, the current architectural and historic interest of the buildings within the site and will form conclusions regarding the degree to which the proposed development will preserve or enhance the conservation area. In doing so, the report will evaluate the degree to which the proposed development conforms to planning policy with regard to conservation areas. This report accompanies a planning application submitted in full with a comprehensive package of detailed drawings suitably illustrating the proposal.

3.0 Relevant Planning Policy

3.1 The policies set out below are those that are directly relevant to the consideration of the proposed development in respect of its impact upon the Barwell Conservation Area.

3.2 Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment – sets out the national planning agenda in respect of the historic environment including listed buildings and conservation areas. It identifies that s72 of the Town & Country Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. It states that if any proposed development conflicts with that objective, there will be a strong presumption against granting planning permission.

3.3 In respect of Conservation Area considerations, it is considered that there is no conflict between any of the policies set out and, as such, Section 38 of the Planning & Compensation Act 2004 requires conservation area issues to be assessed against the policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For this purpose, the development plan comprises the Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Structure Plan 1996-2016 and the Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan 2000-2010. Only the latter plan contains policies of direct relevance to conservation area considerations.

3.4 The Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan contains several policies of relevance to this proposal. Policy BE7 sets out the general design criteria for conservation areas as follows.

POLICY BE7 - DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

IN CONSERVATION AREAS, THE PRIMARY PLANNING POLICY WILL BE THE PRESERVATION OR ENHANCEMENT OF THEIR SPECIAL CHARACTER (INCLUDING BUILDINGS, RELATED SPACES, VIEWS IN AND OUT OF THE AREA, TOPOGRAPHY AND VEGETATION) OR APPEARANCE. PLANNING PERMISSION AND CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT FOR PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD HARM THAT SPECIAL CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE WILL NOT BE GRANTED. IN AND ADJOINING CONSERVATION AREAS, THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL REQUIRE THE SITING AND DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS, TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THEIR CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE AND TO BE IN SYMPATHY WITH THE MERITS OF NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENT. THE FOLLOWING

CONSIDERATIONS WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN DETERMINING APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

A) THE SITING OF PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO EXISTING URBAN SPACES AND EXISTING BUILDING LINES;

B) THEIR OVERALL SCALE, DESIGN AND PROPORTIONS WHICH SHOULD BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE CHARACTERISTIC FORM IN THE AREA AND COMPATIBLE WITH ADJACENT BUILDINGS AND SPACES;

C) THE DESIRABILITY OF RETAINING FEATURES OF HISTORIC OR CHARACTERISTIC VALUE INCLUDING STREET PATTERN, BOUNDARY WALLS AND STREET FURNITURE; AND

D) THE USE AND APPLICATION OF BUILDING MATERIALS AND FINISHES WHICH SHOULD RESPECT THE LOCAL TRADITIONAL MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES.

3.5 Policy BE8, set out below, presumes against allowing the demolition of buildings in a conservation area, but recognises that there are circumstances where this should be allowed where the loss of the building will not harm the Conservation Area and the proposals for its replacement would preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.

POLICY BE8 - DEMOLITION IN CONSERVATION AREAS

APPLICATIONS FOR THE DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS WILL BE REFUSED EXCEPT WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED:

A) THAT THE LOSS OF THE BUILDING WILL NOT BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA,

B) THAT THERE ARE PROPOSALS FOR ITS REPLACEMENT WHICH WOULD PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA.

CONDITIONS WILL BE IMPOSED TO ENSURE THAT DEMOLITION DOES NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO REDEVELOPMENT.

3.6 Policy BE9, set out below, recognises the importance of shop fronts to a Conservation Area streetscape and seeks that new shop fronts are of high design quality.

POLICY BE9 - SHOP FRONTS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

SHOP FRONTS WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE, OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OR ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST, OR WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE AREA, SHOULD BE RETAINED.

PERMISSION WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR THE REPAIR OR RESTORATION OF THESE SHOP FRONTS OR THEIR COMPONENT FEATURES. WHERE REPLACEMENT IS UNAVOIDABLE, ONLY AUTHENTIC AND CAREFULLY DETAILED TRADITIONALLY STYLED SHOP FRONTS WILL BE PERMITTED.

PROPOSALS FOR NEW SHOP FRONTS OR THE REPLACEMENT OF ALTERATION OF EXISTING SHOP FRONTS WHICH ARE OF INSUFFICIENT QUALITY TO WARRANT THEIR RETENTION WILL BE PERMITTED, PROVIDED THAT THE DESIGN IS OF A HIGH QUALITY, APPROPRIATE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING, THE STREET SCENE AND THE WIDER TOWNSCAPE.

3.7 Policy BE10, below, recognises the harmful effect that shop security measures, e.g. external grilles and roller shutters, can have on the appearance of a Conservation Area.

POLICY BE10 - SHOP SECURITY IN CONSERVATION AREAS

IN CONSERVATION AREAS AND ON LISTED BUILDINGS, PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SECURITY FITTINGS WHERE THIS DOES NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF A LISTED BUILDING OR CONSERVATION AREA.

3.8 Policy BE11, below, recognises the impact that advertisements can have upon the character and appearance of a conservation area. It sets out that new advertisements should be traditionally styled and carefully detailed.

POLICY BE11 - ADVERTISEMENTS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

WHERE EXISTING ADVERTISEMENTS, SIGNS AND FASCIAS MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHARACTER OF A CONSERVATION AREA, THEY SHOULD BE RETAINED. REPLACEMENT ADVERTISEMENTS, SIGNS, AND FASCIAS SHOULD BE TRADITIONALLY STYLED AND CAREFULLY DETAILED.

PROPOSALS FOR NEW ADVERTISEMENTS, SIGNS AND FASCIAS OR THE REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING FEATURES WHICH ARE OF INSUFFICIENT QUALITY TO WARRANT THEIR RETENTION WILL BE PERMITTED, PROVIDED THAT THE DESIGN OF THE REPLACEMENT IS OF A HIGH QUALITY, APPROPRIATE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING, THE STREET SCENE AND WIDER TOWNSCAPE.

3.9 Barwell's Conservation Area Leaflet states that the compact village core of Barwell has a positive visual quality of simple proportions. It derives this visual quality from the form and character of its older 18th Century development mixed with 19th Century industrial construction.

3.10 The Council's determination of this planning application, as directed by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 should be in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.0 Context

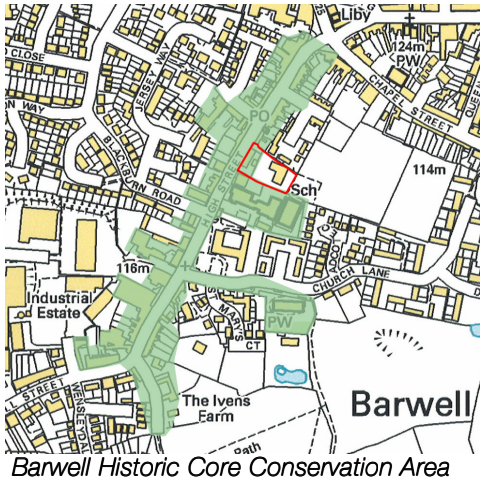
4.1 Barwell is a village which is closely linked with Earl Shilton. It gets its name from old English 'Bar' meaning Boar, and 'wella' meaning spring. In around 1043, at the start of Edward the Confessor's reign, the village was owned by Leofric, Earl of Mercia (husband of Lady Godiva). He gave Barwell to the Abbey of Coventry. The principal industry in the village before 1860 was market gardening.



Barwell High Street, 1888

4.2 Beginning in 1860, and continuing for the next 40 years, Barwell was subject to the development of a leading boot and shoe manufacturing industry. Over this period, 11 purpose-built boot and shoe factories were established in Barwell. This industry thrived and led to the development of a compact Victorian village core, which is illustrated on the above historic map. The application site is within this core (outlined in red) and it appears to have perhaps been in some form of agriculture-related use previously, given the array of outbuildings extending from its rear and its connection to the open fields beyond.

4.3 The historic core of the village was designated a Conservation Area on 17 July 2001. This Conservation Area is highlighted in green on the plan below and the application site is outlined in red; the Conservation Area covers the frontage of the site only. Many of the boot and shoe factories also survive, marking Barwell's industrial heritage and these form a separate conservation area within Barwell, also designated on the above date. The application site is within the village core conservation area and it is this area which will form subject of this assessment.



Barwell Historic Core Conservation Area

4.4 One of the strongest characteristics of Barwell's village core Conservation Area is its street pattern, illustrated in the images below. The street pattern consists of small scale, two storey buildings built continuously abutting the street frontage. There are some exceptions, which are normally landmark buildings, for example the school. The majority of the buildings are late Victorian workers' dwellings, but there are also some early Victorian cottages. There are also some slightly later purpose-built commercial buildings, which follow the street pattern but introduce a slightly different scale and proportion.



Historic street pattern – buildings abutting road frontage

4.5 The general streetscape of Barwell High Street holds its character in the continuous built frontage that draws the eye around gentle bends. This streetcape is made interesting by subtle variations in eaves, ridge and floor heights of buildings and also by the variety of chimney stacks that remain standing against the skyline.




Significant buildings in the village core

4.6 There are a small number of significant individual buildings in Barwell village centre. The oldest building in the village, apart from the Church, is the Queens Head Public House, which is a thatch and timber cruck frame building (pictured above). This was restored in the 1990s and it makes a pleasant contribution to the street scene. This is one of three listed buildings in Barwell and it is closest to the application site. The other two listed buildings comprise St Mary's Church and a war memorial, which are situated off High Street and therefore are not seen in the same visual context as the application site. The Barwell C of E Junior School (also pictured above), just south of the application site, is also a significant landmark in the Conservation Area.



Recent flats development on the corner of High Street and The Barracks

4.7 There are relatively few modern developments within Barwell village core Conservation Area. Perhaps the most notable is the development of flats pictured above, which is diagonally opposite the application site. Whist this development follows the continuous road frontage pattern of development and turns the corner to create a feature corner, unfortunately it does not make the most of the design opportunity offered by this prominent location. Its proportions are in conflict with the adjoining terrace of cottages, in particular, the taller eaves height and the depth of brickwork above the first floor windows appears at odds with the streetscape. The dormer windows are also uncharacteristic of the historic built form of the Conservation Area street frontage. It is also unfortunate that more attention has not been paid to the detailing of the building. The uPVC windows are not set within reveals as one might expect in order to reflect the Victorian character of the surroundings. The overall lack of detailing also makes the building appear bland; more could have been made of eaves level corbelled brick work, cills, lintels and decorative stringing.

4.8 Most of the buildings fronting the streets of Barwell Conservation Area have been significantly altered since their original erection in the late 19th Century. Alterations comprise the following:-

- Various forms of rendering;
- Painting of brickwork detailing;
- Replacement of windows with uPVC/non-traditional glazing patterns;
- Removal of chimneys;
- Removal of traditional shop fronts;
- Introduction of large-pane glazed uPVC shop fronts;
- Display of internally illuminated box fascia and projecting signage;
- Replacement of slate and rosemary tiled roofs with concrete tiles.



Some examples of modern signage and shopfront alterations which have affected the original character of Victorian buildings

4.9 These alterations are considered to have significantly degraded the character and appearance of the buildings, such that the quality of the conservation area is quite low-grade. It is considered that the fairly recent designation of the conservation area has been too late in bringing in policy control over such alterations. The result of this is that, whilst the form and proportions of the buildings have some character, there is very little architectural detail of any value and the detailing and signage of the buildings appears visually cluttered and discordant.

4.10 In conclusion, Barwell Conservation Area is considered to be in need of some enhancement, which could be offered by well-conceived development schemes.

5.0 Existing Buildings on the Application Site

5.1 The application site presently contains a number of buildings. To the front of the site is the oldest building. This is shown on the 1888 map of Barwell (see page 8 of this report) and it appears to have then comprised two or three cottages with an array of outbuildings forming a small courtyard to the rear. Whilst this may have suggested some form of agricultural or commercial use, it is perhaps more likely that these outbuildings will have housed the sanitary facilities and washhouses for the cottages. These outbuildings have, however, long since been demolished.



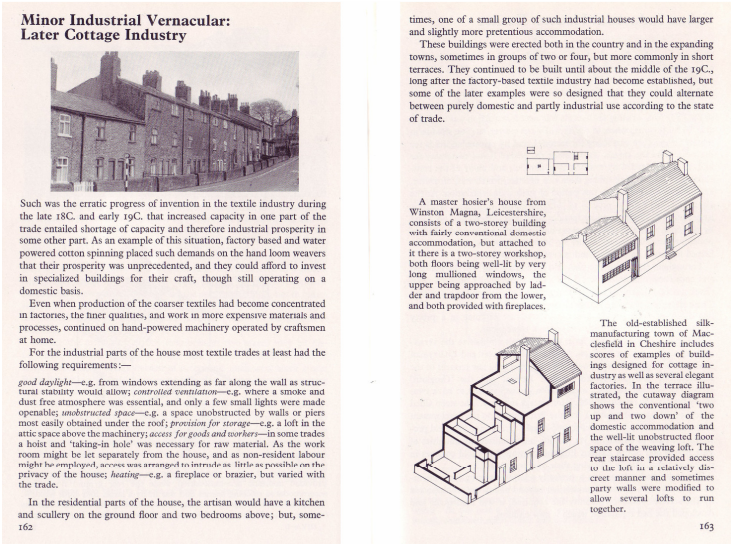
Frontage of the application site

5.2 The buildings to the rear of the site comprise modern, flat roofed storage buildings of no architectural merit, most of which fall outside the boundary of the Conservation Area. Views to the rear of the site are gained through the existing vehicular access and the rear of the site presents an untidy appearance to the street scene.



Rear of the application site

5.3 The building on the street frontage is considered to derive from cottage industry vernacular as defined by Ronald Brunskill in the Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture (1971) – see extract below. In particular, what can be seen of a mix of horizontal and vertical windows in the original building is characteristic of this building vernacular.



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 brazier, 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 Winston 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 buildings 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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5.4 However, this building has been significantly altered since it was first erected. It has had two storey flat roof extensions added to its rear with arched windows marking an odd contrast to the character of the building. The building has been completely rendered, which has masked any of its original brickwork detailing, making it appear as a bland, white mass of building from which it is difficult to discern any architectural or historic character. Chimneys have been removed and cast iron rainwater pipes have been replaced by white uPVC pipes of a modern profile. Of perhaps the worst impact, however, are the neo-Georgian windows, which have replaced the original windows and significantly disrupted the architectural integrity of the building.

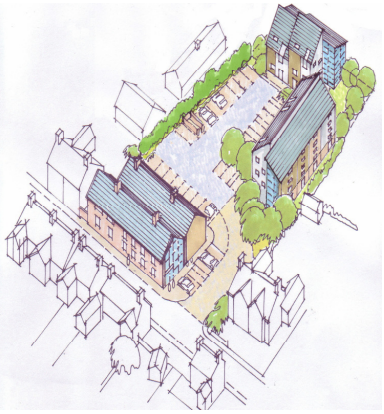
5.5 Standing amongst other buildings which have been similarly altered, the building on the frontage of the application site at best makes a neutral contribution to the conservation area. Whilst it may once have had a character that would contribute to the area, it has now been all but stripped of that character. The material planning consideration is what exists on the site today, and on that basis, the building is not worthy of preservation in its own right. It is therefore considered that the loss of the building would not conflict with criterion (a) of Policy BE8 of the Local Plan. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated in the following section of this report that the building can be replaced with a building that makes a significantly more valuable contribution to the Conservation Area, in compliance with the aims of criterion (b) of Policy BE8.

6.0 The Proposal in Context

6.1 The proposed development comprises a single storey retail building on the street frontage, which follows the form and pattern of development in the Conservation Area as it is designed to appear as a two storey cottage. The building has a suitably steep roof pitch and incorporates architectural detailing to return some character to the roofscape of Barwell Conservation Area. The continuous frontage of the building follows the street pattern, which draws the eye along the curves of the street. The proportions and scale of the building are highly appropriate. The double gable form means that two gables of an appropriate height and depth are introduced which are sympathetic to the form of the surroundings.

6.2 The design intent of the building is to reflect 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 element.





6.3 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. The signage to the frontage will be incorporated into brick reveals as 'architectural signage, reflecting local building detailing.

6.4 As the building is viewed up the High Street a striking and high quality new design feature is introduced in the form of a glazed end gable. 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 visually highlighted by a small cedar clad box feature.

6.5 Whilst the proposed buildings to the rear of the site fall outside the designated conservation area, it is recognised that they will have an impact upon its setting. In view of this the same high quality design approach is taken. The building is sited at the head of the access point so that views through the gap in the street scene will be positively addressed with a building of some visual interest. This is a significant improvement upon the present situation, where a long view along the access road does not bring the eye to rest and presents a mundane gap in the continuity of the street scene.

6.6 In view of the above, the proposal is considered to preserve the scale, form and street pattern of the conservation area. It also enhances the conservation area by introducing well designed buildings with sympathetic materials, architectural detailing and fenestration design to a streetscape which is otherwise lacking in such features. The proposals are therefore considered to fully comply with Policies BE7, BE8, BE9, BE10 and BE11 of the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 On the basis of the above assessment, it is concluded that Barwell Conservation Area is mainly characterised by the form and proportions of its buildings and its strong street pattern. It lacks in visual quality in terms of the unsympathetic alterations and additions that have been carried out to most of the buildings prior to its designation as a Conservation Area.

7.2 The building on the frontage of the application site may at one time have had a character which would have made a significant contribution to the Conservation Area. However, it has been so extensively altered that it does not make a contribution that warrants its presentation. Rather, it offers the opportunity for redevelopment with buildings that will significantly enhance the Conservation Area. The proposals subject of this application are considered to achieve that aim and to raise the profile of the Conservation Area with a development of high design quality.

7.3 On the basis of the above and the wider issues set out in this report, it is considered that the proposal complies with all relevant conservation policies of the Local Plan, Therefore neither planning permission nor conservation area consent should be withheld.

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