

Heritage Statement

Land at The Blue Bell, 37 High Street, Desford, Leicester LE9 9JF

Written by:	Ignus Froneman BArch Stud ACIfA IHBC	Date:	10 July 2022
On behalf of:	Everards Brewery Ltd and the Central England Cooperative Ltd	Ref:	0480

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Ignus Froneman, Director at Cogent Heritage, on behalf of the Applicant, and in consultation with the design team, including Marrons Planning consultants and Corporate Architecture. The Heritage Statement supports an application for a proposed convenience store with associated access, parking and landscaping on land to the west of The Blue Bell in Desford, including 37 High Street, and also 2a Main Street. The High Street frontage of the application site was historically developed, but this is now a gap in the townscape, made up of an open tarmac car parking area.
- 1.2 This report considers the potential effects of the proposed development on heritage assets (see below).

Heritage assets

- 1.3 The application site falls in the Desford Conservation Area, part of which can be seen hatched on **Fig 1** below, which is an extract of Hinckley and Bosworth Council's conservation area map for the Desford Conservation Area.
- 1.4 The application site (i.e. the red line boundary) contains The Blue Bell pub, and 37 High Street/2a Main Street, both of which are identified as "*Significant Local Buildings*" on the conservation area map.
- 1.5 The grade II* listed Old Manor House and its attached barn and service block (referred to as the 'Old Manor House' hereafter), is located opposite the High Street frontage of the application site. It can also be seen on **Fig 1** below.



Fig 1: Extract of Hinckley and Bosworth Council's conservation area map, with the application site highlighted grey, with a dotted black outline. Buildings in orange denote "Significant Local Buildings" and listed buildings are shown in red.

- 1.6 There are other, more distant listed buildings in the wider context of the application site, including the grade II* listed Church of St Martin to the north.
- 1.7 Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (GPA 3), notes that heritage assets in some cases have "nested and overlapping settings" (paragraph 8) and that in urban areas, the consideration of setting, given the potential numbers and proximity of heritage assets, often overlaps with considerations of townscape/urban design and of the character and appearance of conservation areas.
- 1.8 The Step 1 assessment advocated in GPA 3 is the identification of heritage assets likely to be affected by the proposed development. In this case, to avoid unnecessary duplication and in the interest of proportionality, the assessment of the effect of the proposed development is undertaken in relation to the setting of the listed Old Manor House building (and the conservation area townscape). The church is not separately assessed in detail, although it is mentioned in places, where relevant.

Site visit and research

- 1.9 This report was informed by a site visit, in February 2022, when the heritage assets and the application site were inspected and photographed. The photos used to illustrate this report were taken on the site visit (unless otherwise stated). Documentary research was carried out to place the application site in its historic context. In particular, images showing the previous buildings on the High Street frontage of the site were sourced as part of the documentary research. The research is intended to be informative, but not exhaustive, and it is possible that other sources of documentary information may exist.

Pre-application advice

- 1.10 Pre-application advice for a similar proposal was sought from Historic England and the advice, under ref. PA01197574 (by letter, dated 17 November 2022) was broadly supportive and can be summarised as:
- i. The scale, design and materials of the proposed extensions would not make them overly prominent in the setting of the Old Manor House. Old Manor House would remain the dominant building in the street scene and there would be limited to impact to the significance it derives from its setting.
 - ii. No issue with development in this location, given the historic precedent, as demonstrated in the Heritage Statement. This would to some degree re-instate the historic sense of enclosure along High Street.
 - iii. The proposed extension is large in scale and would include a large area of flat roof behind a small mono-pitch on the NE and NW elevations. This detail is not prevalent in the conservation area and would fail to preserve or enhance its character and appearance. The scale of extension necessary was questioned, and whether it may be possible to decrease or omit the area of flat roofing by introducing further single storey gable extensions.
 - iv. With regards to design, an effort has been made to break up the massing and reflect the local character. The proposed roof pitch replicates the existing steep slopes, which was welcomed.
 - v. The blind openings used to break up the masonry would be more successful if they were active openings. More could be done in terms of additional detailing and brick patterns/bonding to break up the massing and create a more active elevation.
 - vi. The area between the proposed convenience store and public house is proposed for car parking, bike store, play area and beer garden along with a potential beer garden on the edge of High Street. There is an additional area of hardstanding in the north-east corner of the car park. While this is at the rear of the site and is

not prominent in views the addition of hardstanding in this area would cause additional negative impact to the conservation area.

- vii. The proposals bring about an opportunity to enhance the appearance of this part of the conservation area, which could justify the additional hard standing. The current proposals for planting and the introduction of better-quality materials would improve the appearance of this area but further enhancement, particularly to the character and appearance of the conservation area, could be achieved through the introduction of a boundary wall.

- 1.11 The present proposals are similar to the pre-application proposals, with some revisions to take into account the advice received, but the present proposal also reflects practical considerations, further to detailed consideration of operational and other requirements.
- 1.12 The Design and Access Statement shows options for different roof forms that have been explored, although these would create a more complex structure that would further obstruct the existing building and would result in the need for complex drainage.

Legislation and policy overview

- 1.13 The section below summarises the key provisions of s.66 & s.72 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plan policies.
- 1.14 **Legislation:** Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). Section 66(1) of the Act sets out the statutory duty in relation to development affecting the setting of listed buildings: and section 72(1) sets out the statutory duty in relation to any buildings or other land in a conservation area.
- 1.15 It is a well-established concept in case law that 'preserving' means doing no harm for the purposes of the 1990 Act. The Court of Appeal's decision in *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council* [2014] (EWCA Civ 137) established that, having 'special regard' to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building under s.66, involves more than merely giving weight to those matters in the planning balance. There is a strong statutory presumption against granting planning permission for any development which would fail to preserve a listed building or its setting (and the same for conservation areas). In cases where a proposed development would harm a listed building or its setting (or a conservation area), the Barnwell decision has established that the duty in s.66 of the Act requires these must be given "*considerable importance and weight*".

1.16 The key legal principles, established in case law, are:

- i. 'Preserving' for the purposes of the s.66 and s.72 duties means 'to do no harm'¹.
- ii. The desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building, or the character or appearance of a conservation area must be given 'considerable importance and weight'².
- iii. The effect of NPPF paragraphs 199-202 is to impose, by policy, a duty regarding the setting of a conservation area that is materially identical to the statutory duty pursuant to s.66(1) regarding the setting of a listed building (and s.72 in relation to the character and appearance of a conservation area)³.
- iv. NPPF paragraph 202 appears as part of a 'fasciculus' of paragraphs, which lay down an approach corresponding with the s.66(1) duty (and similarly the s.72 duty)⁴.
- v. If harm would be caused, then the case must be made for permitting the development in question, and the sequential test in paragraphs 200-202 of the NPPF sets out how that is to be done. If that is done with clarity, then approval following paragraph 202 is justified. No further step or process of justification is necessary⁵.
- vi. In cases where there may be both harm and benefits, in heritage terms, great weight has to be given to the conservation and enhancement of a listed building, and its setting, and the preservation and enhancement of a conservation area. It is, however, possible to find that the benefits to the same heritage assets may be far more significant than the harm⁶.
- vii. An impact is not to be equated with harm; there can be an impact which is neutral (or indeed positive)⁷.

1.17 **The National Planning Policy Framework:** Section 16 of the revised (July 2021) National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in paragraphs 189 to 208. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states

¹ *South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1992] 2 AC 141 per Lord Bridge at p.146E-G in particular (obiter but highly persuasive).

² *Bath Society v Secretary of State* [1991] 1 WLR 1303, at 1319 per Glidewell LJ and South Northamptonshire DC v SSCLG [2014] EWCA Civ 137 (Barnwell Manor), at [22-29] per Sullivan LJ.

³ *Jones v Mordue* [2015] EWCA Civ. 1243 per Sales LJ [at 28].

⁴ *Jones v Mordue* [at 28] per Sales LJ.

⁵ *R (Pugh) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2015] EWHC 3 (Admin) as per Gilbert J [at 53].

⁶ *R (Safe Rottingdean Ltd v Brighton and Hove CC* [2019] EWHC 2632 (Admin) as per Sir Ouseley [at 99].

⁷ *Pagham Parish Council v Arun District Council* [2019] EWHC 1721 (Admin) (04 July 2019), as per Andrews, J DBE at 38.

that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

- 1.18 According to paragraph 194 applicants should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 1.19 According to paragraph 199, which applies specifically to designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to a heritage asset's conservation (the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This reflects the provisions of the 1990 Act in that it applies irrespective of whether it involves total loss, substantial harm, or less than substantial harm to significance.
- 1.20 Paragraph 200 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. It then deals with substantial harm to, or total loss of significance of, different types of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 201 continues on the subject of substantial harm (this level of harm is not relevant to the present proposals).
- 1.21 Paragraph 202, on the other hand, deals with less than substantial harm. Harm in this category should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) describes public benefits as "*anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress*".
- 1.22 According to paragraph 203, the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 1.23 Paragraph 206 states that Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 207 recognises that not all elements of a conservation area or will necessarily contribute to its significance.
- 1.24 The Development Plan is the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy (2009) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (July 2016).

- 1.25 **Core Strategy:** Policy 8 'Key Rural Centres Relating to Leicester' requires new development in Desford to respect the character and appearance of the Desford Conservation Area by incorporating locally distinctive features of the conservation area into the development.
- 1.26 Policy HC1, entitled "*Heritage conservation and growth*" is the most relevant of the policies in Chapter 7. Parts A and B of the policy deals with strategic considerations/requirements and these are not relevant to determining planning applications.
- 1.27 **Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (the SADMP):** Policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP seek to protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. Policy DM11 states that the Borough Council will protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment throughout the borough. This will be done through the careful management of development that might adversely impact both designated and non-designated heritage assets. All development proposals which have the potential to affect a heritage asset, or its setting, will be required to demonstrate:
- i. An understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, and
 - ii. The impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset and its setting, including measures to minimise or avoid these impacts;
 - iii. How the benefits of the proposal will outweigh any harm caused; and
 - iv. Any impact on archaeology in line with Policy DM13.
- 1.28 Policy DM12 requires all development proposals to accord with Policy DM10 (Development and Design). The same policy requires development proposals to ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced through the consideration and inclusion of important features (as identified in Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans). All proposals for development affecting the setting of listed buildings will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the proposals are compatible with the significance of the building and its setting.

2.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION

Desford Conservation Area

- 2.1 This next section first considers the historic background to the application site, and then draws from the *Desford Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (March 2010) but is also supplemented with observations from the site visit and research.
- 2.2 The first sourced map to show the application site in any detail is the 1845 Desford tithe map (**Fig 2**), although unfortunately the map does not show the properties in any detail (e.g. the Old Manor House is not shown), only developed frontages/side roads, and it is of limited use.

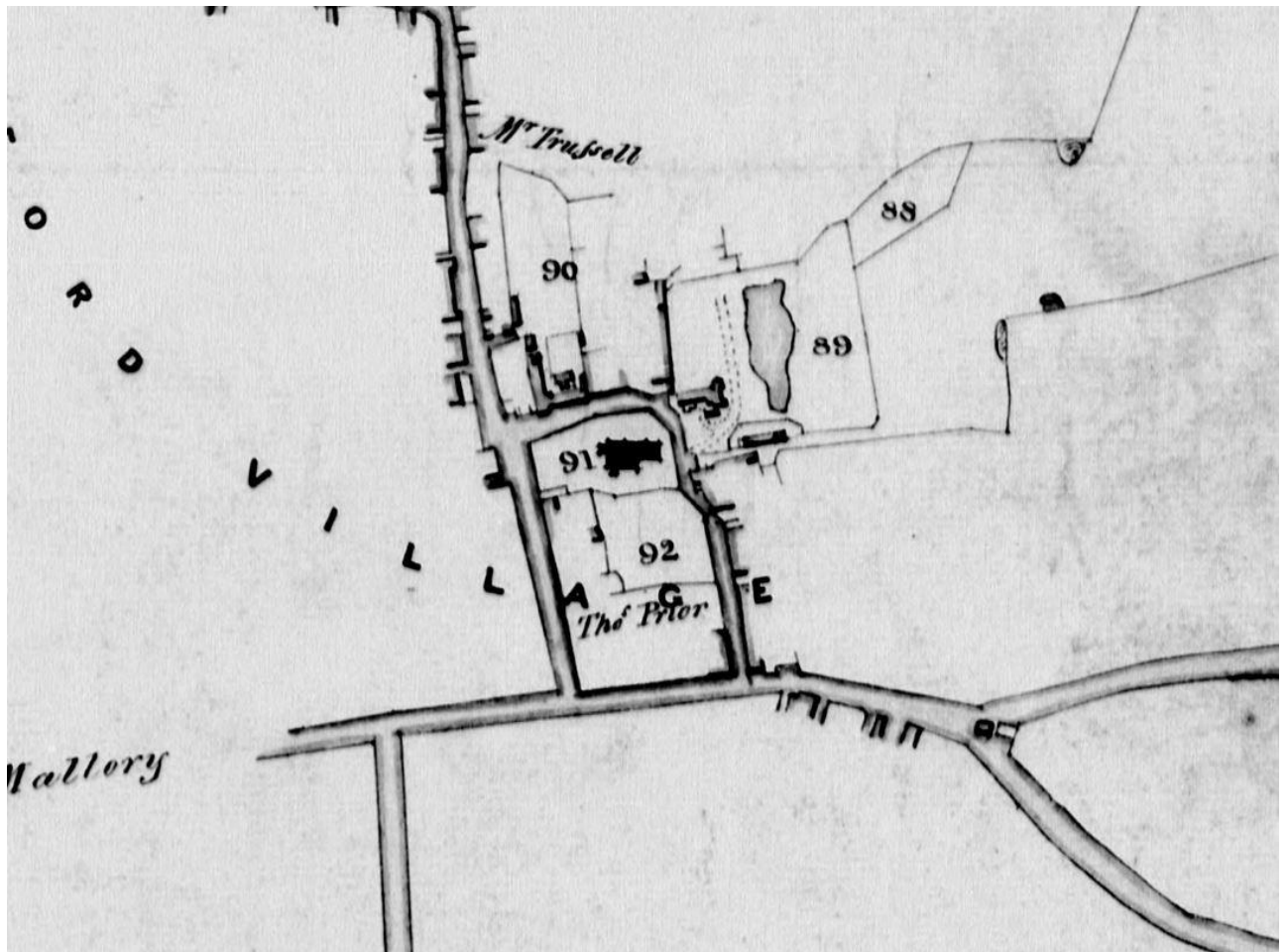


Fig 2: Extract of the 1866 Ordnance Survey map, with the rough location of the application site in red.

- 2.3 The 1886 Ordnance Survey map (**Fig 3**) is the first sourced detailed depiction of the historic arrangement of built form on and near the application site. It shows that there was a gap to the west of the Blue Bell pub (which is not labelled as a pub on the map), but with a couple of cottages on the High Street opposite the Old Manor House. A number of undated historic images show these cottages, from different angles and to varying extents (**Figs 4-7**); these are very helpful in recording and bringing to life the cottages recorded on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map.

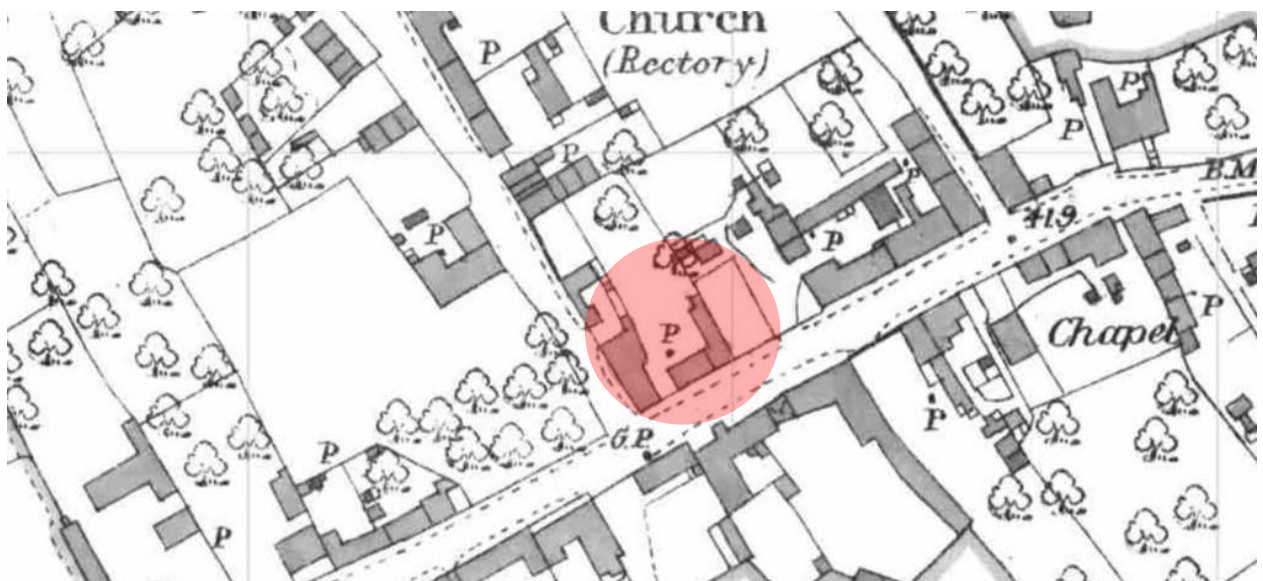
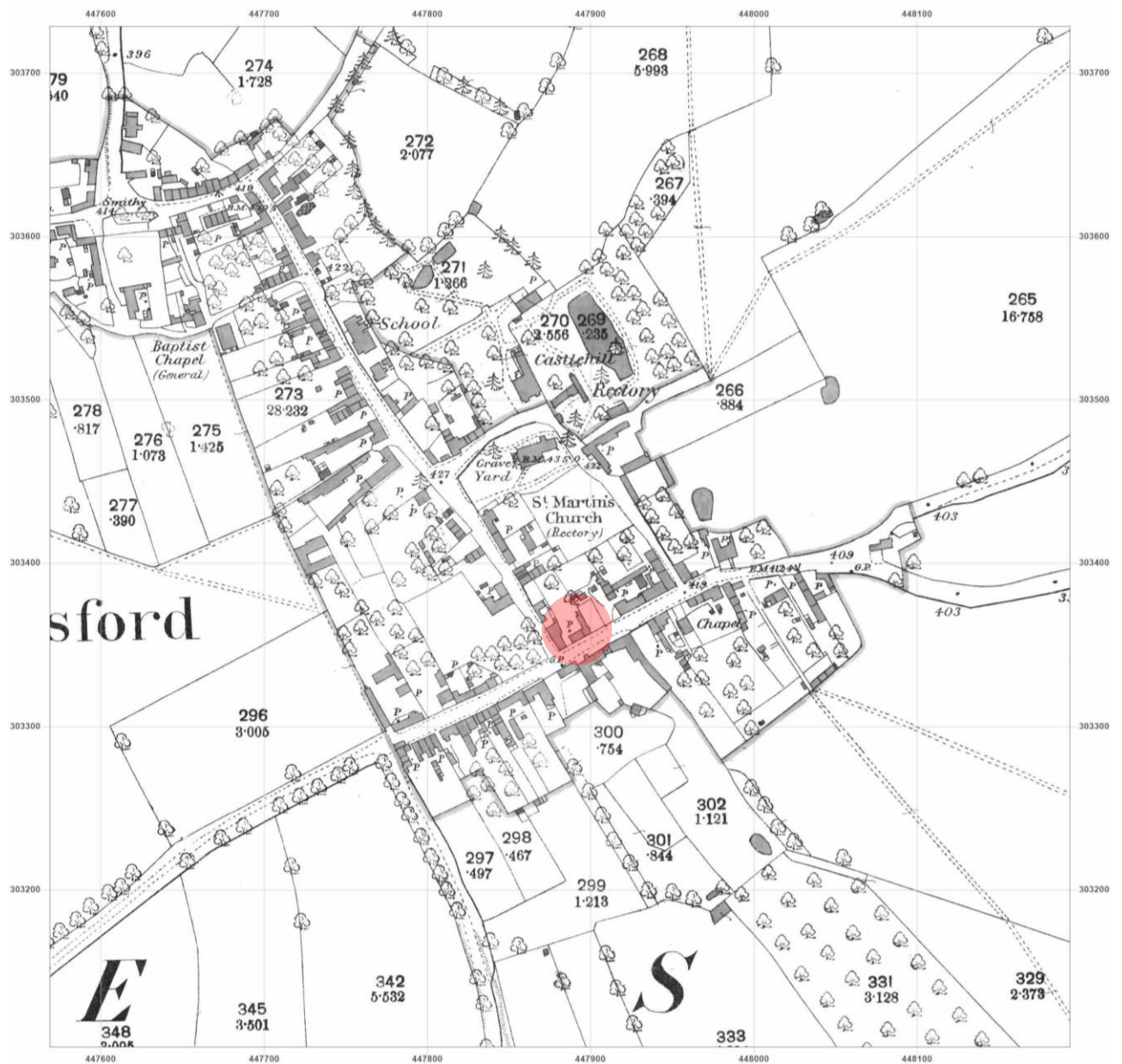


Fig 3: Extract of the 1886 Ordnance Survey map, with the rough location of the application site in red and a detailed extract below.



Fig 4: An undated, c. early 20th century photo looking east along the High Street. The Old Manor House is on the right and the thatched cottages that stood on the application site can be seen on the left.



Fig 5: An undated, c. early 20th century photo looking west along the High Street from the junction with Church Lane. The Blue Bell is seen in the centre right with its gable seen prominently, and behind it (marked with a red arrow) the thatched cottages that once stood on the application site can be seen.



Fig 6: An undated, c. early 20th century photo from a similar location as Fig 5. The Blue Bell is seen on the right and behind it (marked with a red arrow) the thatched cottages that once stood on the application site can be seen. The Old Manor House on the opposite side of the road is also clearly recorded.



Fig 7: An undated, c. early 20th century photo looking of the Old Manor House from the east. The thatched cottages that once stood on the application site can just be seen on the extreme right (marked with a red arrow).

- 2.4 When looking at the historic photos, a few observations can be made of the thatched cottages that stood on the High Street frontage of the application site:
- i. The cottages were hard up against the narrow pavement, and they brought definition and enclosure to this part of the street that is now altogether absent, where the townscape spills over into the car park.
 - ii. The building was probably timber framed and of some considerable age, though it is not possible to say very much more from the images.
 - iii. The cottages stood 1.5 storeys tall, with roof accommodation in the steeply pitched roofspace.
 - iv. Between the cottages and the Blue Bell pub there was a brick wall, with a cobbled carriage entrance to the land west of the pub.
- 2.5 There is, therefore, clear historic evidence, from multiple sources, to show that historically this part of the application site was developed, and the form of this development is also recorded, so that the location and scale of the cottages that once stood there can be determined.
- 2.6 The 1903 Ordnance Survey map (**Fig 8**) records the same arrangement at the 1886 version, although by now the pub is labelled (perhaps showing that it was formerly houses that were later converted to a pub, although it is not unknown for pubs not to be identified on Ordnance Survey maps).

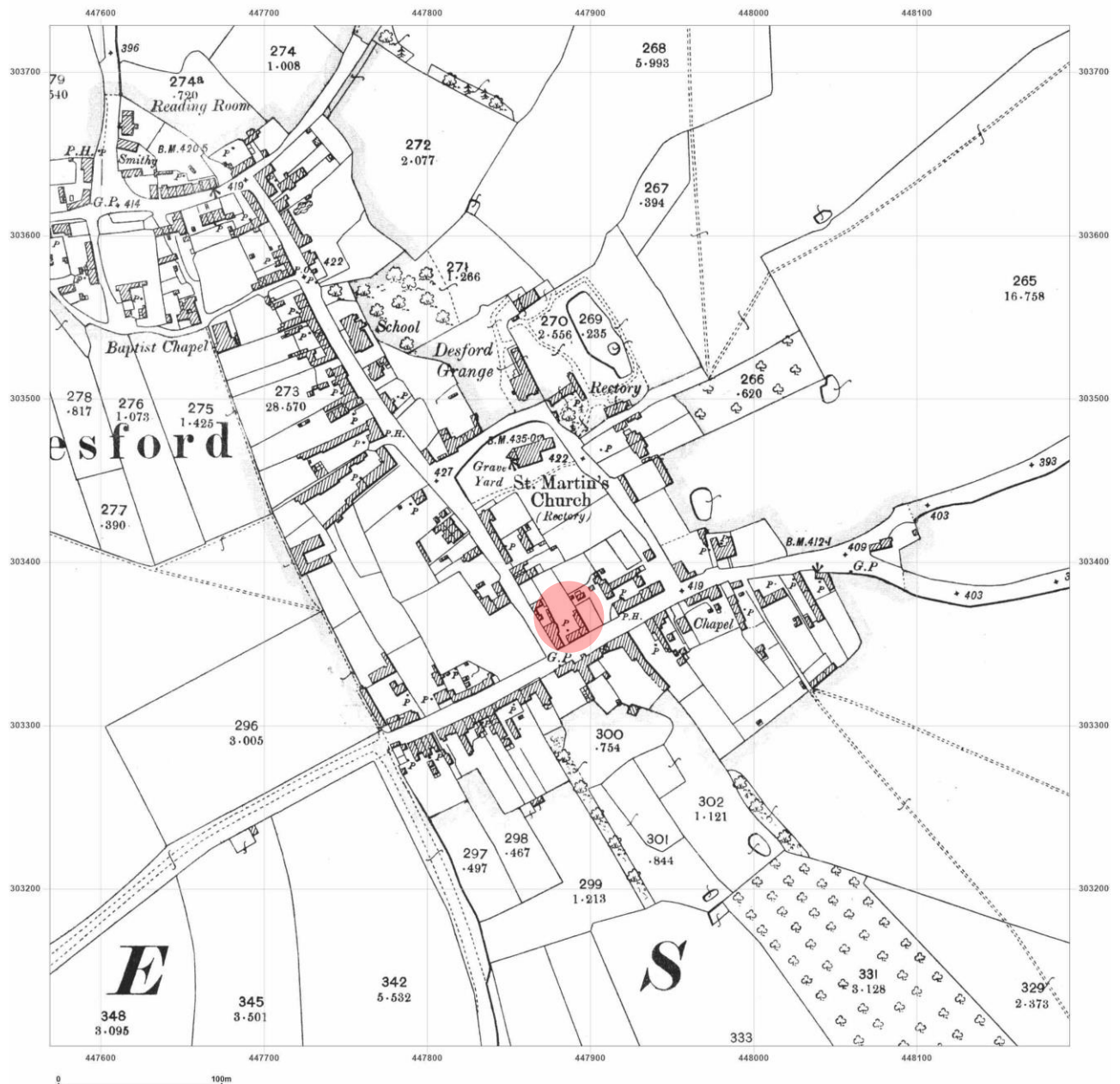


Fig 8: Extract of the 1903 Ordnance Survey map, with the rough location of the application site in red.

2.7 The same arrangement remains on the 1916 and 1930 Ordnance Survey maps (not replicated here). The next Ordnance Survey map in the sourced sequence is the 1959 version (**Fig 9**), by which time the cottages had been demolished; this is perhaps not surprising given their somewhat sorry state recorded in the historic photos, though the loss of these characterful historic properties is regrettable, nonetheless. The same map shows the roundabout that was added to the west of the Main Street frontage of the application site.

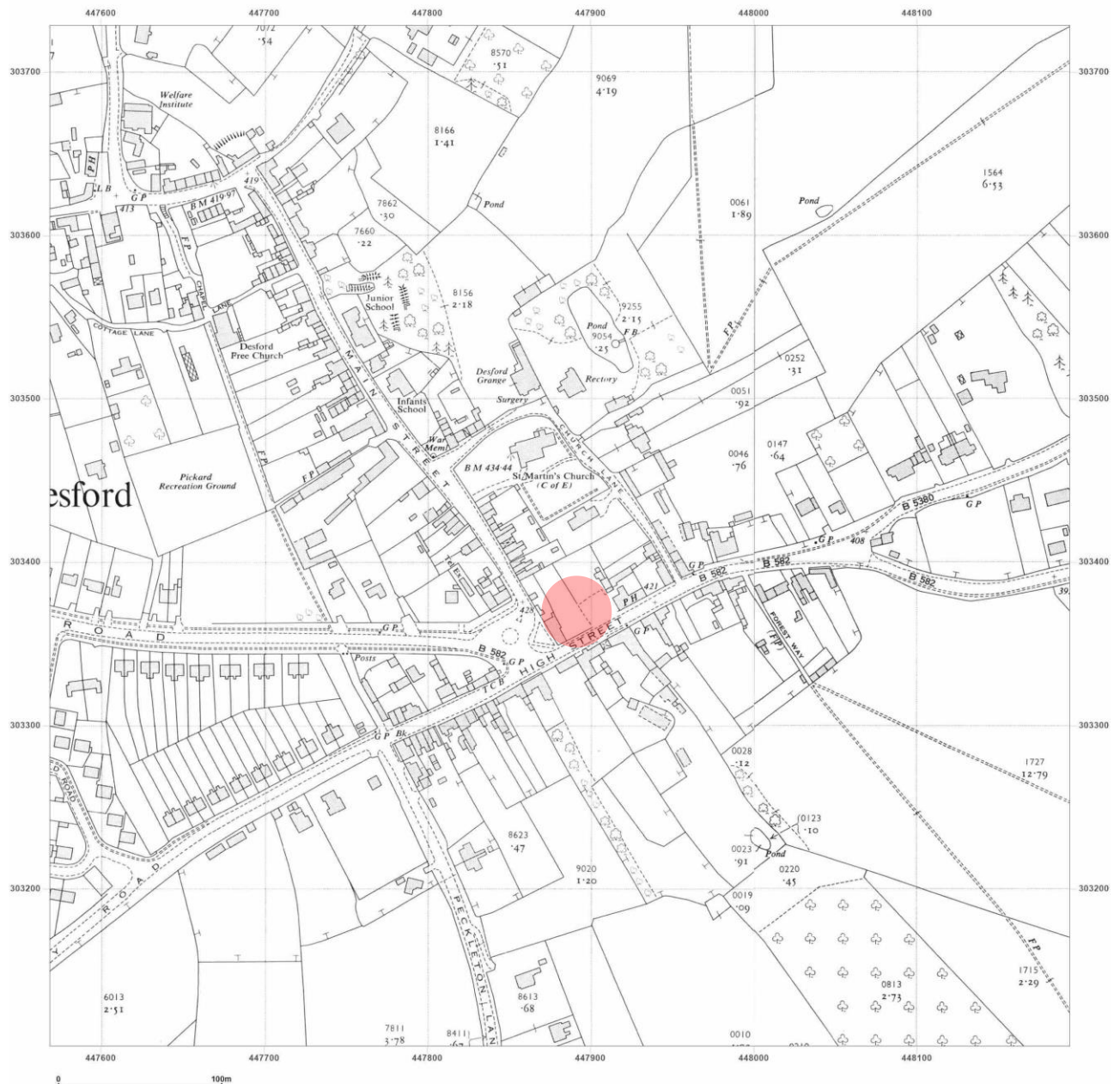


Fig 9: Extract of the 1959 Ordnance Survey map, with the rough location of the application site in red.

- 2.8 Turning then to the Character Appraisal, the document notes that, as with many villages in Leicestershire, little is known of Desford until after the 11th century, when the village was first mentioned in the Domesday Book. Reference is made to Hugo de Grantmesnil, a Norman Baron who was the Lord of the Manor over a settlement known as 'Diresford'.
- 2.9 According to the Character Appraisal, the oldest surviving building of note is the Old Hall on the High Street (i.e. the grade II* listed Old Manor House). The Character Appraisal describes it as an impressive dwelling, built in 1640 for Thomas Muxloe, a member of a well known Leicestershire family. The separately listed two storey dovecote to the south, of c. 1700 is also noted.

- 2.10 The Character Appraisal goes on to highlight that, until the industrial revolution, Desford was an agricultural community. Prior to enclosure, farmhouses were located in the village itself, not in the fields (e.g. the Old Manor House, which was once such a farmhouse). The Character Appraisal also highlights how Desford has undergone substantial change in recent years, with a considerable amount of new housing that has extended the village boundary. It is described as a commuter village, of which the majority of the working population travel out of the settlement to work.
- 2.11 The Character Appraisal divides the conservation area into five character areas, with the application site falling within Character Area A - The High Street. The following points are noted:
- i. Up to the turn of the 20th century, the High Street formed a 'hard edge' to the settlement.
 - ii. The Old Manor Farm had been the most important secular building in the village for several centuries.
 - iii. Along the Street's northern edge, the buildings, although linked as terraces in places, were more dispersed, with quite large gaps in the frontage.
 - iv. The most important characteristic of the High Street is that of enclosure. The building line on each side is practically continuous with terraced properties, set at the back edge of the pavement throughout its length (though this obviously does not apply to the application site, where the important enclosure has been lost).
 - v. The average height of buildings on the High Street is relatively low.
 - vi. The street shows the greatest concentration of brick buildings in the area, amounting to approximately 60% of the properties.
 - vii. Roof shapes and materials play an important role in the character of this street.
 - viii. Ridges are parallel to the street, interrupted in many cases by slight differences in height and tall brick chimney stacks.
 - ix. Pitches are steep, probably due to previous thatching.
- 2.12 According to the Character Appraisal, buildings in the conservation area fall into the three distinct and largely self-explanatory categories below:
- i. simple vernacular buildings;
 - ii. Victorian feature buildings; and
 - iii. post-war properties

- 2.13 Under the heading 'Unlisted Buildings of Local Importance' the Old Bluebell Inn is described as a 'timber framed structure' that has retained its original window openings on the street frontage, although a new third gable has been added, replacing the earlier eyebrow dormer. The building is then also described as a 'rubble stone building' that has been rendered (which seems perhaps more correct) and with a bay window added to the south-east elevation. Of the application site, the Character Appraisal states simply:
- "The car park was the site of a row of thatched cottages which were demolished in the early 20th century."*
- 2.14 Under the heading 'Traditional Building Materials' the Character Appraisal notes that the principal building material in the conservation area is brick.
- 2.15 Under the heading 'Contribution of Spaces and Natural Elements' the Character Appraisal only notes the traditional terraces on the back edge of pavement, with short front gardens, which have restricted open space within the street scene. The exceptions noted are the:
- i. recreation ground;
 - ii. churchyard;
 - iii. large gardens on Church Lane; and
 - iv. open space contained behind the rear of properties.
- 2.16 The application site is not noted here, which is unsurprising, given that it is an expanse of tarmac car parking area where the historic enclosure of the street has been lost through the demolition of the cottages that historically stood here. At this juncture it is worth noting that there is an arrow across the application site on the Council's conservation area map, showing 'Views to be protected' (e.g. see **Fig 1**).
- 2.17 This view can be seen at **Photo 1** below. The only plausible explanation for identifying the view as important is that the spire of the grade II* listed Church of St Martin to the north can be seen from here, in filtered views when the trees are leafless. As can be seen from the photo, it is not a very good view of the church, and it is not a view in which the significance of the building can be appreciated or understood. It is simply a view in which the spire can be seen across a car park, when the trees are not in leaf. **Fig 10** then shows the view with the trees in leaf, from broadly the same location, from Google maps (it is not possible in Google maps to place the view in exactly the same location).
- 2.18 When comparing the two, it may simply be noted that neither the significance of the church suffers a seasonal degradation when the spire is obscured by the trees, nor does

the conservation area townscape suffer from harm when the trees are in leaf. This demonstrates, if that was necessary, that the visibility of the spire in the view is not of any real importance in terms of the significance of the church, or the conservation area.



Photo 1: The view north across the application site from the High Street.



Fig 10: The view north across the application site from the High Street, from Google maps (September 2021).

- 2.19 Under the heading 'Enhancement', the Character Appraisal states that the enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area can be defined as the reinforcement of the qualities that provide the special interest, which warranted designation of the conservation area. This may be achieved through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites.

- 2.20 Turing then to the application site, specifically and in more detail, the previous section has established that there was historically a developed frontage on this part of the High Street, opposite the grade II* listed Old Manor House. These were built hard up against the pavement and gave a good sense of enclosure to the street – something that the Character Appraisal describes as the ‘most important characteristic’ of the High Street. The cottages were unfortunately demolished in the 20th century, leaving what is now an unsightly gap of tarmac car parking area, fronted by little concrete blockwork walls. The *Photographic Record of Desford Conservation Area* that accompanies the Character Appraisal has a photo of the application site’s High Street frontage on page 15, noting “*The block wall fronting the Bluebell Pub Car Park is an unattractive feature that needs replacing with a traditional brick wall.*”
- 2.21 Although a view across the application site is identified in the appraisal map, as has been noted, it is difficult to conclude that this is a view that meaningfully contributes to the heritage significance or either the church, or the conservation area. Historically, the cottages would of course have blocked such views, in any event.
- 2.22 When looking at the back of the existing corner building along the west of the application site (i.e. 37 High Street/2a Main Street), it can firstly be observed that the cottages that once stood on the High Street would have been much older than this building (which looks to be of Victorian date), and would have predated it. That means the back of 37 High Street/2a Main Street would not originally/historically have been intended to be seen.
- 2.23 Neither can it be said that the blind, pebble rendered back of the building with its poor quality little adjunct is a thing of fortuitous beauty (**Photo 2**). It was never intended to be seen, and that is not surprising; it is not something that contributes to the character, appearance or quality of the conservation area.



Photo 2: The view across the application site of the back of 37 High Street/2a Main Street.

2.24 The gable end of 37 High Street, with the projecting stack (**Photo 3**), is not unpleasant or uncharacteristic, but it is undoubtedly somewhat marred by neglect, and the pebble rendering that has been applied across the whole building, as well as the two inserted modern windows.



Photo 3: The south gable of 37 High Street.

2.25 Much the same can be said of the frontage on Main Street, which is generally of traditional proportions, appearance and form, and which looks pleasant enough in longer views (**Photo 4**). However, from close by the poor quality and neglected state of the building is readily apparent (**Photos 5 & 6**).



Photo 4: 37 High Street/2a Main Street, from the west.



Photo 5: A detail of 2a Main Street.



Photo 6: A detail of 37 High Street.

2.26 The *Photographic Record of Desford Conservation Area* that accompanies the Character Appraisal describes the building as follows:

"The properties 37 High Street and 2A Main Street are attractive buildings that restrict views along High Street at an important intersection."

2.27 The north gable of 2a Main Street addresses a poor quality little leftover space (**Photo 7**); neither this gable, nor the space it addresses, can be said to meaningfully contribute to the character, appearance or quality of the conservation area. As can be seen from **Photo 8**, there are no views through this space that could be regarded as important.



Photo 7: The north gable of 2a Main Street addresses a poor quality little leftover space.



Photo 8: The space to the north of 2a Main Street.

The Old Manor House

- 2.28 The building was listed on 2 October 1952, and the list entry was last amended on 28 February 1991; the main descriptive text from the list description is quoted below:

"Farmhouse and attached barn. Early C17, altered C19. Red brick in English bond, sandstone ashlar quoins and dressings, Swithland slate roof having raised stone coped gables and 2 square ridge stacks with strapwork decorations. Timber frame. T - plan. 2 storey plus attics irregular 4 bay front having chamfered plinth and 3 main coped gables with kneelers The second bay from the right is narrower and comprises a 2 storey projecting porch, also gabled, The lower part is in ashlar with a four centred arched doorway, The porch covers a plain planked door and is flanked by single 3 light windows with beyond to the left a further 2 light window. At first floor level the porch is jettied out on all three sides on timber joists with shaped ends, it is built of brick with ashlar quoins, It contains a 2 light timber sliding sash and is flanked by single 3 light windows and a further similar window to the left. The windows are stone mullioned with square leaded casements and have rectangular ashlar surrounds. In the gables are blocked 2 light oak mullioned windows. To the rear is a projecting service wing also with some contemporary windows. To the left is an attached brick barn with a C17 timber framed wall of square panels. To the right, forward of the house is an attached early C18 service block in Flemish bond with burnt headers and an asbestos roof. Interior not inspected but reputed to retain C17 staircase with splat balusters and some panelling."

- 2.29 The Pevsner⁸ guide dates the building to 1630-40, and describes the building as having had a lobby entrance plan; this chimes with Pevsner's naming of the building as Old Hall Farm, the name indicating a former hall house.

- 2.30 The Character Appraisal describes the building at two places, as follows:

"The form of the Old Manor Farm group of buildings reflects its original agricultural use. The complex includes a medieval house showing a fine gabled facade onto the street, its timber framed outbuildings attached through a roofed, gated cart entrance and within the courtyard, the unique four gable dovecot."

"This brick building was constructed between 1600 and 1640. It is 2 storeys, a basement and 4 gables on the street frontage one of which is a 2 storey porch with stone quoins, two storey projecting porch and an original 17th century staircase. The building has a swithland slate roof covering. The house has a projecting wing on the west side and is

⁸ *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (1984) Pevsner N, Williamson E

separated by a roofed cart entry to an L shaped range of single storey former farm buildings. It was a working farm until the 1990's."

- 2.31 The *Photographic Record of Desford Conservation Area* that accompanies the Character Appraisal reiterates the Character Appraisal:

"The Old Manor House on High Street is an early C17 Grade II listed farmhouse built in red brick in English bond. The property has sandstone ashlar quoins and dressings and Swithland slate roof. The windows are stone mullioned with square leaded casements that have rectangular ashlar surrounds. To the left is a brick barn that has been converted into a dwelling and to the right, forward of the house, is an early C18 service block built in Flemish bond."*

- 2.32 Turning then to the significance of the building, firstly, as a grade II* listed building, Old Manor House falls into a category of "*particularly important buildings of more than special interest*"; only 5.8% of listed buildings are listed grade II*⁹. Together with grade I listed buildings, grade II* listed buildings make up the 'top tier' of listing, comprising together only 8.3% of all listed buildings in the country.

- 2.33 The Old Manor House (**Photos 9 & 10**) is an imposing, traditional vernacular building that has considerable historic interest in its age and fabric, and as a high status house in the village. It likewise has a high degree of architectural interest in its form and fabric, including its plan form and internal features.

⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/>



Photo 9: The Old Manor House, from the NE.



Photo 10: The Old Manor House, from the west.

2.34 When considering the contribution of the application site, in its present state, to the setting of the listed Old Manor House, this is as described for the conservation area, and can be seen on **Photo 11** below. It can be observed that:

- i. Historically there would have been a tight streetscape with cottages of considerable age, possibly even workers' cottages roughly contemporary with the Old Manor House, and situated opposite it.
- ii. These have gone, and this part of the setting of the Old Manor House has changed beyond recognition; suffice it to say that this has not been a positive change, or one that can be said to enhance or reveal the significance of the listed building.
- iii. There is now only a tarmac car parking area fronted by low blockwork walls. The application site is absent of any historic forms, materials or surfaces. The townscape character and quality in this area is very poor.
- iv. There is nothing fortuitous about this unfortunate gap in the townscape. Neither can it be said that there is visual harmony or congruity in the townscape as a result of the demolition of the cottages that would have stood here (see GPA 3, paragraph 9).
- v. The application site instead manifests as a most regrettable gap in the townscape that has fragmented the historic sense of enclosure and definition to the street (as recorded on the historic photos).
- vi. Instead of containment and definition, the application site spatially spills out into a car park that can be described as something of an eyesore in the setting of this characterful, high status house.



Photo 11: A view of the application site's frontage opposite the Old Manor House, from the west.

2.35 In summary, the application site in its present state represents a poor quality fragmented townscape gap that bears no resemblance to the tight historic townscape. Instead, it is an unfortunate gap site that markedly detracts from the character, quality and coherence of the setting of the Old Manor House.

3.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The proposed development has been developed with cognisance of the sensitivity of the application site, being located as it is right opposite the grade II* listed building and within the conservation area. Nevertheless, it has also been recognised that there was historically development here and that there is an opportunity to enhance the conservation area townscape and the setting of the listed building.
- 3.2 The Character Appraisal notably highlights enclosure as the most important characteristic of the High Street. The proposed development is for the reinstatement of a sympathetically designed High Street frontage that draws on the historic scale and form of buildings that once stood here. On the other hand, it is also recognised that the proposal is for a 21st century development that includes a shop, and it was not considered appropriate to directly copy the earlier cottage forms for this type of development, or as a pastiche.
- 3.3 The proposed development draws on the previous forms in terms of scale, and in terms of typical detailing, forms and materials common to the local area. This roots the proposed additions in their context and ensures that they blend well into the townscape, but without directly copying the older cottages previously on the site.
- 3.4 The success of this approach, on the High Street, is demonstrated in the CGI at **Fig 11** below. The proposed new building on the High Street frontage has been kept modest in scale and relatively simple in terms of its architectural treatment, to avoid visual distraction from or competition with the allow the Old Manor House. The new building would have a broadly similar scale and presence as the previous cottages on the High Street, and with landscaping and doors, albeit these will not be functional. The proposed building is modest in scale, with dormers breaking the eaves, as is typical of Desford, and as can be seen from the CGI. The CGI shows how a recess has been incorporated in the building line to the east of 37 High Street, which allows for a strip of soft landscaping, and a slight step down from the eaves line of 37 High Street.



Fig 11: A CGI of the proposal, from the SE.

3.5 The single storey rear element has been treated in an appropriately traditional and subservient manner. The modest form of the single storey 'rear' element can be seen on **Fig 12** below, which shows that the sloped edges to the single storey building would assimilate well; the flat roofed element of the building would not be intrusive or visible.



Fig 12: A CGI of the proposal, from the east.

- 3.6 In accordance with the presence of the Blue Bell pub, and indeed the fact that the site fronts the High Street – traditionally a place where commercial uses would be found – a commercial use as proposed would be appropriate in this location (the corner building on the junction with Church Lane was historically also in commercial use).
- 3.7 The Character Appraisal states that natural materials, particularly Welsh slate, should be used on all new development. It is proposed to use brick and slate, both of which are appropriate, with the Character Appraisal noting that 60% of the buildings on the High Street are in brick. The Character Appraisal also highlights how ridges on the High Street run parallel with the street, as is proposed along the High Street frontage.
- 3.8 The site plan shows the potential for planting, or green landscaping, to the remainder of the High Street frontage of the application site.
- 3.9 When compared with the existing situation and the tarmac car parking area, the proposal would enhance the setting of the Old Manor House. It would also enhance the conservation area townscape. Like the cottages that historically occupied the site, the new development would of course block views across the application site, although as has been noted earlier, the relevance of such views in heritage terms is questionable. In any event, the views to the east of the proposed development would be retained, where there would still be a car parking area (though it might be regarded beneficial to soft landscape this remaining street frontage in any event, to improve the townscape quality and obscure the parking area; it may be noted that historically there were boundary walls here).
- 3.10 Along the Main Street frontage, it is proposed to extend 2a Main Street to the north by way of a small addition, treated as a separate structure to reinforce the sense of fine grain, again faced in brick and with a traditional shopfront (**Fig 13**). The new addition is modest and would complement the grain of the Main Street, and it would be appropriately truncated with a gable, featuring a traditional chimneystack. This would be a marked improvement when compared with the poor quality gable of 2a Main Street (e.g. see **Photo 7**).



Fig 13: A CGI of the proposal, from the SW.

- 3.11 The existing poor quality shopfront to 2a Main Street would be replaced with a better quality traditional one. This would be a marked improvement and an enhancement to the conservation area. The windows to 37 High Street/2a Main Street would be replaced with sympathetic new ones, and the elevation would be repaired. This would be a marked improvement and an enhancement to the conservation area.
- 3.12 In conclusion, the proposed development would preserve and enhance the significance of the conservation area. The proposed development would also materially enhance the setting of the listed Old Manor House. These are heritage-specific benefits, which attract great weight¹⁰ in the planning balance.

¹⁰ As with harm to the significance of 'great weight' as per NPPF 199 equally attaches to heritage benefits, not only by parity of reasoning, but also because the definition of 'conservation' in Annex 2 of the NPPF encapsulates 'sustaining and enhancing' significance.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The assessment in this report presents a detailed understanding of the Desford Conservation Area and the setting of the grade II* listed Old Manor House, based on historic research and an understanding of the historic morphology of the townscape in the context of the application site.
- 4.2 The proposed development takes the opportunities to enhance the setting of the listed building, and the conservation area townscape, by introducing well-considered contextually appropriate new additions that reference the traditional style and the local character of Desford, though without resorting to pastiche or the blind replication of earlier forms. The proposed use is likewise appropriate to the area. The result is a good quality new 21st century arrangement of built form that would enhance (positively contribute to) the conservation area and the setting of the Old Manor House.
- 4.3 No harm has been identified to the setting or significance of the listed building, or the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area.
- 4.4 There are therefore no conflicts with the Development Plan policies. Neither does the proposal trigger paragraphs 201 or 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.5 The proposed development also complies with the statutory duties in s.66 and s.72 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, 1990.